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**Background** In Sri Lanka, road traffic injuries (RTIs) kill one person every 4 h. RTI can cause serious economic difficulties for families. Although public sector healthcare is free in Sri Lanka, the household costs of RTI are not known.

**Objective** To assess the costs of treatment, lost work, vehicle and other damages, transport and lodging, compensation paid, intangibles etc to households that have sustained RTI.

**Methods** A community based cross-sectional survey was conducted in 2008 using stratified multistage cluster sampling. Data were collected using pretested structured interviewer-administered questionnaires. Individuals who had sustained an injury/death due to a road traffic crash (RTC) in the preceding 12 months were included. A direct accounting approach was used.

**Results** Of 11724 persons screened (n=3080 households), 149 had sustained RTI, of these 16 were deaths. The mean age of those injured was 28.8 years (SD=16.8). 56.6% were employed at the time of the crash. The mean household costs attributed to these injuries were Rs. 34 244 (Rs.100- Rs. 700 000), given the average family income (≤Rs.10.000). In all income groups, there were wide ranges of costs following RTI. Loss of income due to lost working days was significantly higher (p<0.001) for those who worked per hour (29) compared to those who were salaried (4). Only 14.1% had any form of health insurance.

**Significance** The economic impact of RTI on the injured/dead victims and their families is substantial. Implementing appropriate preventive measures could reduce these economic effects, in addition to the immeasurable costs of pain, grief, and suffering.

\* 1US\$=Rs. 114.00

1 NZD \$=Rs. 100.00