

Injury prevention: maturation of the field

Roderick J McClure 

One of the privileges of being the editor of *Injury Prevention* is the opportunity to read 600 or so prepublication reports of the latest research in the injury prevention field—each year, year in year out. After some years of doing this, I have developed a sense that the field of modern injury prevention has matured. Rather than trace our development, what I will do here is use the manuscripts published in this issue to show the extent to which the field is now comfortable in its own skin.

There are 14 manuscripts published in this issue. Collectively, they reveal injury prevention to be a profession no longer questioning its identity, just confidently going about important programmes of work in concert with the world of which it is part. The manuscripts in this issue have not been especially selected and collated. They are simply the next in the list of unpublished manuscripts ranked by acceptance date. They create a coherent narrative of interwoven themes.

Jagnoor and colleagues¹ present an analysis focusing on the enabling factors and barriers to scaling up sustainable drowning reduction interventions at the community and national levels. Bhaumik and colleagues² address this same issue of facilitators and barriers to scaled-up interventions in an evidence synthesis of child restraint use in motor vehicles. The first of these two papers is a qualitative study based on information from semistructured interviews with key informants, the second is a formal evidence synthesis of qualitative studies. Appropriately, with a focus on programme implementation, both papers considered the public as a key partner in the scientific endeavour and used qualitative methods to understand the context within which the implementations we applied. Both manuscripts clearly grounded their methods in quality scientific principles and undertook and reported their work with scientific rigour.

The report by Hall and colleagues³ echoed concepts evident in the work of Bhaumik and colleagues² in a randomised controlled trial showing that user-driven design of instructional materials for child

restraint use improves proper restraint use. The research exemplifies a specific solution for one of the barriers previously noted. The study combined public involvement and randomised control trial methods, demonstrating that scientific rigour can be combined with evaluation relevance. The high-level evidence, quantitative methods and the qualitative precursor papers are each written without qualification or apology, with authors of each knowing their roles in the collective contribution to knowledge.

Structural (both social and built) causes of injury have long been recognised by researchers, but we are increasingly recognising that understanding the interactions between entities is as important as identifying the entities themselves.^{4–7} Descriptive epidemiology and surveillance has been a foundation of injury prevention practice and remains just as important as ever, and in this issue we see continued development of the meaning we can derive from some of these data.^{8–11}

The manuscript by Berecki-Gisolf and colleagues¹² uses surveillance data in an outcome evaluation of a systemic intervention. The result is elegant science. The feature by Ng-Kamstra and Lajoie¹³ provides a valuable account of the process of achieving social change.

The narrative emerging from these papers is a coherent one, with a strong plot line and a simple focus. This issue describes a rich body of work amassing the full range of evidence needed to make the biggest possible improvements in injury-related harm, for the equitable benefit of all.

Which brings me to this issue's State of the Art Review. We may not be able to change the past. We may not be able to predict the future. But it is our responsibility to learn from what we already know, and apply it, so we can help make the future the best it can possibly be. Read this State of the Art Review to learn what our knowledge of public health can tell us about what we can do to maximise the potential of autonomous vehicles.¹⁴

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