Motor vehicle occupant protection for children

EDITOR.—Thanks for the several articles in the June issue that discuss motor vehicle occupant protection for children. I have a few comments to add to the discussion.

In response to your comment about possible industry foot dragging in 'Random thoughts', the debate going on throughout the NHTSA and car seat industries and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) right now is not whether to install universal anchorages for child restraints, but which design will be the best in the long run, and whether or not such anchorages will be necessary. If the new design standard is to be universally adopted, it must allow for the greatest flexibility of future improvements. Many advocates as well as industry experts in the occupant protection field do not think that the uniform 'smart' system (ISCAIP) is the best design. The Europeans have moved ahead to begin the refinement of the ISCAIP design with regular airbags and auto shut-off. While the ISCAIP is 'uniform' but will never be 'universal', the Europeans, Canadians, and Australians are planning on using the rigid anchorage.

As Dr Flaura Winston says in her commentary, many of Clinton's efforts will fail because the final NHTSA rule will further universal harmonization as well as promote long range adaptability. So the opposition to the General Motors proposal as put forward by the NCCTC is unfounded. Since a design based on technology, not just anchorages, is available, it would make little to simplify installation. Rather than one belt to tighten, parents would have two lower anchorages that the user must tighten. The UCRA is 'uniform' but will never be 'universal', the Europeans, Canadians, and Australians are planning on using the rigid anchorage.

In his paper Dr Fred Rivara's conclusion (ISCAP report) that children's restraint use needs more attention. Regarding car seat bag fatigues, I would like to point out that the children (other than rear facing infants) who have been killed were NOT using restraints at all or used them incorrectly. We don't have any evidence yet that forward facing children in child restraints or using lap and shoulder belts correctly are in danger of dying due to the anchor, type of restraint (as with airbags) but a desire by the international community to achieve what we have long envisioned, a truly foolproof snap-in installation for child restraints.

In her paper, Rhonda Moller writes in his paper, 'Fire Inspector and Coordinating Fire Inspectors Project: Emergency Medical Services, Public Safety and Education Branch'...that the NHTSA is \...unaddressed...\...and web-...\...I disagree.

Should injury prevention programmes be targeted?

EDITOR.—I read with interest the September issue of Injury Prevention regarding the debate concerning targeted programmes versus population approaches in injury prevention. I do not agree with Ward's assessment that 'most parents are able to determine for themselves the risk of their child falling...\'. I disagree with Ward not because I think most parents might be incapable of such determinations, but because of other variables that come into these determinations—such as values and socioeconomic conditions, to mention two. To submit us to any idea, or for subscription information, contact Safe Ride News Publications (address above).

PS. Safe Ride News is a quarterly report on developments in child occupant protection and bicycle/pedestrian injuries. It contains dates and 'how-to' information related to child restorments, summaries of recent research, innovative programs, and new research. The newsletter is broadening its coverage of Canadian activities and hopes to include over 200 articles per year. To submit news or stories, or for subscription information, contact Safe Ride News Publications (address above).

Death on the road

EDITOR.—Every year more than 40 000 people are killed on US roads. Each of these people was someone's child, mother, father, or other loved one. The death of Princess Diana, however, has focused public attention on motor vehicle deaths and the cost of the crash in a way that is unprecedented. The public is no longer accepting that speed kills, drinking and driving is fatal, and not wearing a seat belt contributes to the seriousness of the injury. We know these things and have many strict laws addressing them, yet such tragedies happen every day in every part of the world. Clearly knowledge and laws cannot always protect us. If anything good is to come out of the Paris crash tragedy, we must do more than redouble our efforts to promote and enforce safe driving behaviors. We also must educate ourselves and our decision makers about what other prevention options are available and effective, so that when the ubiquitous lack of perfection in human nature surfaces, it need not kill.

While we don't yet know enough details about the Paris crash, we can already tell that the companies, we do know that cars can be built to provide occupant protection and so they cannot exceed reasonable speeds. The sides of roads can be designed to cushion and safely slow vehicles. Vehicles can prevent intoxicated drivers from driving. Better transport systems can attract the public to safer means of travel.

These are not radical suggestions, but feasible and potentially effective. A fundamental mental of the science of injury control is that prevention should be focused on the 'weakest link' in the chain of causal events leading to a crash. However, it is not clear that there are one or two variables that are targeted high risk groups'.

Thus I echo Moller's final statement '...unaddressed...\...and web-...\...I disagree.'