New items on NISU web site

New items have been added to the web site of the National Injury Surveillance Unit (NISU), at the Research Centre for Injury Studies at Flinders University in Adelaide, Australia. The full texts are also published on paper.

- Spinal cord injury, Australia 1995/96 (the first statistical report of the new national register of spinal cord injury)
- Injury Issues Monitor #11 (NISU’s rebirth as part of Flinders University, information on the 2nd National Conference on Injury Prevention and Control (February 1998, Melbourne), and other news)
- Injury Deaths Australia, 1991–95. (Counts and rates for the most recent five years available, aggregated in various ways. Pick what you are interested in and the page will produce a table.)

Visit the site at http://www.nisu.flinders.edu.au/welcome.html and go to the “what’s new” section. Take a look, and let NISU know what you think.

Proceedings of 5th International Conference on Product Safety Research

The European Consumer Safety Association (ECOSA) and the Departament de Sanitat of the Generalitat de Catalunya (Barcelona, Spain) organised the 5th International Conference on Product Safety Research, Barcelona, 15–16 April 1997. The conference dealt with research into a wide range of subjects related to the safety of consumer products, for example children’s products, products for the elderly, helmet use, safety in sports and recreational activities, and child resistant closures. Other research topics related to risk assessment, noise levels of toys, structural integrity of products, safety labelling, and warnings. The Proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Product Safety Research, Barcelona, 15–16 April 1997, includes 25 research papers. Copies (price Dfl 100) can be ordered from ECOSA, PO Box 75169, NL-1070 AD Amsterdam, The Netherlands (fax: +31 20 511 4510).

Injury Prevention 1998;4:10–13

Volunteers were recruited through local schools, community organisations, and by word of mouth. Over 100 volunteers took part in at least one training phase over the 30 month duration of the project. They acquired the necessary proficiency at half day training courses in which they both observed good teaching practice and gained experience of teaching under the guidance of project staff. Separate courses were designed for each of the three skills covered by the scheme and were run in each of the 10 schools in the area.

A training took place at designated sites on the streets near children’s schools in sessions lasting 25–30 minutes. Children were taught in groups of two or three and received between four and six training sessions on a roughly weekly basis. Trainers maximised children’s participation by using open questioning techniques and encouraging cooperation between children wherever possible.

In total, more than 750 children received training over the duration of the project. To assess how effective training had been, a 30% sample of trained children undertook a series of roadside tests both before and after training. The researchers also tested a matched sample of control who did not undertake the training programme. In all three skills, the judgments and behaviour of trained children improved substantially following training. They were much more likely to choose safe locations to cross the road; used a greatly improved strategy when crossing at parked vehicles; and were able to deal effectively with a range of intersections. Moreover, these benefits were maintained over a two month period after training ended, showing that the improvements were robust. The judgments of trained children also appeared to be underpinned by better conceptual understanding, making them able to deal with novel situations in a relatively flexible manner. By comparison, improvements in control children were much more modest. Although there was slight improvement, especially after the second post-test, this was well behind that achieved by trained children and was also conceptually weaker.

The improvement seen in this group probably reflects the experience gained informally during the programme of pretesting and post-testing. However, at the observed rate of growth, it seems unlikely that this group would attain the level of trained children for several years.

It was not possible to assess the effectiveness of volunteers on an individual basis but, taken as a group, the results they achieved were easily comparable with those achieved by highly qualified staff in earlier studies. Although volunteers were not selected on the basis of having any particular qualification other than an interest in the welfare of children in Drumchapel, when given clear instructions about what they were trying to achieve together with a small amount of experience of working with children, they were able to translate this into action rather effectively. This shows that volunteers from deprived communities can play a central part in road safety provision, providing they have been properly prepared for the job. Given the importance of practical training, they must be considered an extremely valuable “resource”.

Contact Deidre O’Reilly, DETR, Great Minster House, 76 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DR, UK (tel: +44 171 271 4772, fax: +44 171 271 4728) for copies of the Kerbcraft manual and research report.
The report Safety of Baby Walkers and a supporting video are published by International Testing Ltd, 65 New Cavendish Street, London W1M 8AX, UK (fax: +44 171 436 0944).

Road safety in Scotland
Want to know what is happening in road safety in Scotland? Get hold of a copy of the colourful newsletter Direction from the Scottish Road Safety Campaign (SRSC). It contains a comprehensive round-up of what is happening in each council, as well as an overview of Scotland-wide initiatives. To learn more about the SRSC, visit their web site at www.safety.org.uk or write to a Scottish Road Safety Campaign, Heriot-Watt Research Park (North), Riccarton, Currie, Edinburgh EH14 4AP, UK (tel: +44 131 472 9200, fax: +44 131 472 9201, e-mail: info@road-safety.org.uk).

Guns for art
A “guns for art” incentive program to take firearms out of circulation recovered more than 700 guns in Winnipeg, Manitoba, far exceeding the expectations of the police chief when he decided to join five other cities across Canada in the 10 day amnesty for gun owners. In return for surrendering a firearm, people received a limited edition print from one of five Canadian artists. The Guns for Art Foundation in Montreal hoped to retrieve 10,000 weapons. All the firearms will be destroyed (Winnipeg Free Press, October 1997).

Meanwhile, gun control advocates in the US—where an estimated 1500 children are accidentally shot each year—were reportedly please that eight gun manufacturers have agreed to provide child safety locks on their firearms by the end of 1998. The voluntary initiative will affect some 80% of handguns made in the United States (Reuters, Winnipeg Free Press, October 1997).

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Members of AHPA, STIPDA, and APA may subscribe at a reduced rate of £53/US $84; please call Julie Halfacre on +44 171 383 6660 (fax: +44 171 383 6661) for details.

Updated child resistant packaging standards
A Canadian Standards Association Technical Committee is reviewing and revising the existing Canadian standard on child resistant packaging. The work will also include the development of new requirements for non-reclosable packages such as a blister package. The Committee will be looking at the new US CPSC’s child resistant protocol and the ISO standard as the basis for the review. One of the key issues that the Committee will be addressing is the problem that older adults experience in trying to open the child resistant packages. There are three consumer representatives on the Committee, including one representative of a seniors association.

Bunk bed recalls
Since 1990, the US CPSC has received reports of 35 children who died from being caught on the top of wooden bunk beds. But all one was exception. After a difficult start, it was noted that, although there were no International Standards for playgrounds or playground equipment, the European standards organisation, CEN, had released several drafts forming the start of a series of prENs (equivalent to Australian drafts for public comment) dealing with specific playground and playground equipment issues, with more to come. The four prENs which were available at the time were issued for public comment in Australia and Belgium. An considerable comment was received, reflecting the widespread interest in the subject. The remaining parts in the prEN 1176 series are being evaluated by the Committee as they become available, and used as the basis for further public comment drafts.

The first two parts of the European series considered by our Committee (Installation, inspection, and maintenance) have now been revised in the light of the comment received, and combined into one document which has been finalised and should be published soon. In addition to the topics in the European drafts, the resultant document contains playground design and development aspects to assist in ensuring the playground and its equipment are suitable for the intended age group and located appropriately. The public comment responses on the baby walkers on the other part of the European series already released for comment in Australia and New Zealand (General safety requirements and test method) will be considered next. The Committee has agreed that consideration should be given to providing more information on requirements for children with special needs, but has not yet decided whether it should be a separate part, or incorporated into the general requirements.

Because of the need to balance safety, play value, and challenge (and not forgetting fun), there will never be unanimity on what the requirements for playgrounds and playground equipment should be. However, with a strong Committee, focused on cooperation and finding solutions, the road to new playground standards is clearer than ever before. You could almost say we are on the downhill slide!
aged under 4 years. In addition, five children aged 2 and under have died in the US due to entrapment in the top of metal bunk beds. In the light of these figures, it is no surprise that 15000 bunk beds with openings that present a potential entrapment hazard were recalled in September 1997. The gaps can be large enough for a child’s body to pass through but small enough to trap the head. Since 1994, more than 5000 bunk beds have been recalled in the US with entrapment hazards.

European Road Safety News

European Road Safety News is published free of charge in English, French, and German by Prévention Routière Internationale (PRI) on behalf of the European Road Safety Foundation. It can also be found on the internet at www.pri.lu. The October 1997 issue gives brief details of road safety programmes from around the world. To receive the newsletter, contact Lorenzo Pamparana, PRI, 75 rue de la Madeleine, BP 40, L-8005 Bertrange, Luxembourg (fax: +352 31 14 60, e-mail: int.road.safety@pri.lu).

WHO pamphlets include child safety

The European Region of the World Health Organisation (WHO) has commissioned the development of a series of pamphlets on 10 themes, one of which is accidents including child safety. The pamphlets are designed to be educational documents, with three distinct parts: a summary outlining the subject in short; punchy style aimed at busy politicians; a longer section written in largely non-technical language and aimed at the interested lay person; and a technical annex intended for the person who has to take action on the subject.

The pamphlets will cover 10 themes (air, water, solid wastes, urban planning, noise, accidents, housing, radiation, toxicology, hygiene). For each theme a cover pamphlet is written (for example air and health) and then the topic is broken down again into more focused and accurate subjects (for example indoor air pollution). This is a large undertaking and will eventually comprise in excess of 200 pages, each covering a specific topic and each translated into up to 25 languages. Case studies from around the European region are used to illustrate possible solutions and each pamphlet offers clear advice on the action local government can take. The languages in which pamphlets have been printed so far include Russian, Latvian, Estonian, Lithuanian, Albanian, and English.

WHO pamphlets include child safety

The WHO pamphlets are being identified from across Europe to reflect the breadth of European experience related to accidents. Each author will cover issues to do with history, social and economic costs, statistics, particularly vulnerable groups, prioritisation of intervention, framework for action, and evaluation. Evaluation is an integral part of the process which the pamphlets wish to promote, as this ensures that the whole process is one of “action centred research”. The use of case studies is also a way that this style of research is promoted, ensuring that others learn from innovative action which has resulted in effective intervention on accidents.

Each pamphlet will be written in such a way that it stands alone, although the whole series will also be written consistently to stand together as a whole. Each pamphlet in the series will contain basic areas: baseline information; prioritisation of issues; framework for action; effective interventions, recommendations, case studies, and costs. WHO hopes to publish the pamphlets by July 1998.

Call for ban on “octopus straps”

Eye specialists called for a ban on octopus straps—elastic luggage straps—because they cause 170 eye injuries a year throughout Australia. The pamphlets are designed to be informative and/or background possible. As well as being useful for politicians, they are intended for the person who has to take action on the subject.

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answer individual calls and requests for information, and information about air bags will be posted on NHTSA's world wide web page.

US consumers who have questions or concerns about airbags should contact the agency's toll-free Auto Safety Hotline at 1-800-424-9393. For up-to-date information on airbag education contact NHTSA's site on the world wide web at: http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov.

Firework injuries in Northern Ireland

For very many years, fireworks were banned in Northern Ireland. However, in 1996 the legislation was changed with the result that 202 people were injured in 1996 during the five weeks around Halloween, the time of year when firework sales peak throughout the UK and during which period special data collection procedures for firework injuries are implemented. (In the rest of the UK, Guy Fawkes night (5 November) is the most popular time for fireworks.) Two thirds of the victims were aged between 7 and 16 years, including one third who were 12–14 years. Eighty six per cent were male. The report on these injuries is the only mention of children's unintentional injuries in The Health of the Public in Northern Ireland. Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer 1996 despite the fact that the province has the worst record for accidental childhood mortality for any part of the UK.

Helmet hazard

A 7 year old girl in Saskatchewan died in September when her bicycle helmet became trapped in playground equipment. She slipped while climbing a wooden play structure and was strangled by the chin straps of her helmet which wedged between two logs. Although some Canadian safety education programs warn children and parents to remove bike helmets at playgrounds, one newspaper account referred to the injury as “a freak accident” (Saskatoon Star Phoenix, September 1997).

Editor's note: This is a disturbing phenomenon as it does little to assist the promotion of helmet wearing. It does not describe an unknown problem. When the European standard for protective helmets for cyclists was developed a number of similar cases were described, mainly from Sweden where helmet wearing is commonplace. The consequence was that a European standard, EN 1080 Impact protection helmets for young children, was developed, specifying requirements for children's helmets offering protection from impacts but with a retention system that would release itself if a child was hanging from the helmet as described in this report. The dilemma is that in crashes helmets need to stay securely on the wearer's head. I do not look forward to the first report of an EN 1080 helmet coming off in a crash and the child suffering severe head injury as a result. (The English language version of EN 1080 is published by the British Standards Institution as BS EN 1080.)

Mandatory playground safety in California

California is the first state to order compliance with federal safety guidelines for playgrounds. By 2000, slides, seesaws, and merry-go-rounds must be modified or ruled out to fit the children who use a particular playground. Surfaces must be absorbent. Municipalities must also comply with any revisions by the CPSC, which is expected the update the guidelines again soon, and to provide for regular inspections. The state law was passed in 1990 but given a decade to take effect. Other states are expected the follow California's lead. There is a loophole to the California law: if no state funds are available for repairs, public entities such as schools do not have to comply; however private schools, motels, and restaurants with playgrounds would not be exempt. There is no enforcement strategy to the law; the threat of lawsuit is the stick.

More news about ICRIN

Hank Weiss has announced that the Injury Control Resource Information Network (ICRIN) (http://www.injurycontrol.com/icrin) new options make ICRIN easier to use. ICRIN's Active “New” Channel provides automatic notice of monthly updates to the “What's New” page via your choice of e-mail or browser notice and caches this page (at the main menu) for faster downloading. Use this “channel” to automatically stay attuned of the latest ICRIN additions of interesting and useful global injury control related web sites.

Clothing safety code of practice

The British Standards Institution has published a code of practice, BS 7907: 1997 The design and manufacture of children's clothing to promote mechanical safety. It aims to minimise hazards including ischaemic injuries, injuries from sharp objects, including zips, and detached objects, strangulation, snagging and entrapment, suffocation and choking, and falls and trips. It also deals with restriction of vision and hearing caused by hoods and other headgear. The standard notes that seven children died in England and Wales in clothing related incidents, mainly hangings.

... and child dies on the London Tube due to clothing entrapment

In October, a 9 year old died when his anorak toggle caught in the closing door of a London underground train. He was dragged to his death when the train moved off. A London Underground spokesman noted that the automatic switches designed to disable a train when a door is obstructed would not be triggered because the toggle was too small.

Visit our stand at the 4th World Conference on Injury Prevention and Control in Amsterdam 17–20 May where we will have a range of injury prevention and relevant publications from the BMJ Publishing Group.

Playground study ranks surfacing material effectiveness

A study of injuries to children in Cardiff, UK, showed that while bark and rubber surfacing are associated with a low rate of injuries, bark alone is insufficient to prevent all injuries, particularly arm fractures. The authors conclude that rubberised surfaces are safer than bark. They also call for the outlawing of monkey bars on safety grounds. The paper also reinforced the conclusions of the Injury Prevention paper from New Zealand by David Chalmers and his colleagues, notably that the risks associated with falls from higher than 1.5 m rise dramatically. (Mott A et al. Safety of surfaces and equipment for children in playgrounds. Lancet 1997;349:1874–6.)

New US government consumer web site

Not sure where to turn to find out what toys are safe or if your car has been recalled? Consumers in the US now have a one stop web site to multiple federal access consumer and information resources. The site, www.consumer.gov, provides information from the CPSC, Federal Trade Commission, Food and Drug Administration, and NHTSA. It is divided into 10 major categories including product safety, your home, and children.

Safe primary schools in Gateshead, UK

A randomised controlled trial of an injury prevention programme conducted in 15 primary schools with 30 control schools is underway in Gateshead in the north of England. The study, funded by the Department of Health, aims to evaluate programmes that concentrate on preventing injuries in schools and on sports and leisure injuries, and reducing hazards in and outside schools. The schools have been randomised on the basis of their type, size, and social priority ranking. The two year intervention phase of the project started in September 1997 after a year of collecting baseline data from hospitals, pupils, and their parents and school staff. Further details: Dr Elizabeth Towner, Community Child Health, 13 Walker Terrace, Gateshead NE8 1EB, UK (tel: +44 191 477 6000, fax: +44 191 477 0370, e-mail: e.l.towner@newcastle.ac.uk).

News from the CDC

The CDC National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC) has just released the publication Prevention of Motor-Vehicle Related Injuries: A Compendium of Articles from the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 1985–1996. This 523 page book is a compilation of all of the motor related MMWRs published between this time period, and serves as a reference document that includes the articles in their entirety, with tables, graphs, graphics, and references. The executive summary includes short abstracts of each of the 53 articles. Areas covered include motor vehicle related injury as a public health problem, economic impact, drinking and driving, child occupant restraints and airbags, safety belts, bicycle and motorcycle helmets, pedestrian safety, and motor vehicle related injuries in rural areas, To order one free copy contact the CDC/NCIPC. This and other publications can be ordered by fax to +1 770 488 1667 or by using the NCIPC web site at http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/pubsub.htm. (Requests for the CDC/NCIPC newsletter Injury Control Update can also be made on this web site.) For further information visit the NCIPC home page at: www.cdc.gov/ncipc.

Contributors to these News and Notes: Anara Guard, James Harrison, Rosie Mercer, Barry Pless, Ian Scott, David Sleet, Hank Weiss, Amy Zieler. Contributions have beenedited or shortened. Items for the September issue should be sent to Michael Hayes at Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT), 18–20 Farrington Lane, London EC1R 3AU, UK (fax: +44 171 608 3674, e-mail: mhayes@nyp.nhs.co.uk) by 1 May 1998.