REGIONAL REPORTS

News from India and China

Morbidity and mortality due to injuries have been officially recognised as significant public health problems in the high income countries (HICs). However, this is not true for the low income countries (LICs). This lack of recognition is assumed by many to be because of an absence of data regarding injuries and because of the prevalence of a "fatalistic attitude" in the population of these countries. Both these assumptions are probably wrong. If injuries are treated as a problem in LICs, deaths due to injuries are clearly given a great deal of importance by the public and officials and these newspapers carry frequent editorials regarding the lack of safety in their respective countries. These newspapers also report the concern that citizens show by demanding safer roads, schools, and homes. This concern is expressed in the form of letters to the editor, formation of community groups to tackle the problem, and pressure in response to tragic events. Some studies also report that poor people spend enormous amounts of money (as a proportion of their incomes) on the treatment of their injuries and other ailments.

A funny thing happened on the way to the meeting: on guns and triggers

Two women who were attending the 1997 American Public Health Association (APHA) annual meeting in Indianapolis were shot in a restaurant while waiting to be seated. A man with a registered .32 caliber handgun was leaning over to pick something up from the floor when a weapon fell out of his pocket, dropped on the floor, and fired two bullets. In the gun world, this is known as a drop-fire, a close kin to a bump-fire, both due to defective trigger mechanisms. When a child chokes on a small ball, an object that can be a toy, the regulatory machinery of government is immediately engaged. No such scenario was set in motion by this shooting in Indianapolis. Although the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms regulates the sale and interstate commerce in handguns, it has virtually no authority to set standards for the design or safety of domestic handguns. And firearms are among the few products specifically excluded from the jurisdiction of the Consumer Product Safety Commission. This is despite the fact that guns are second only to alcohol in terms of their market value. It appears that attempts are being made in some countries of Asia to encourage a move toward this goal of strengthening local legislation.

Mr. Hua Yong Hong of the Traffic Management Research Institute of the People’s Republic of China organised a week long seminar on road traffic safety and congestion last October. The seminar was held in Hangzhou and attended by senior police officials representing the different provinces of China. The lecturers at the seminar included experts from China, Japan, and Singapore. The police officers from different provinces made presentations on specific issues concerning traffic and congestion in their specific locations. With increases in motorisation, there are serious problems concerning pedestrians and bicyclists of which a large number constitute children. The conflict between the need for providing facilities for faster motorised traffic and ensuring the safety of vulnerable road users became evident in the discussions. At present there are clearly no clear guidelines for the resolution of these problems except the control of vehicular speeds through traffic calming and police enforcement. However, much more work needs to be done to evolve location specific designs and policy measures.

An International Course on Injury Control and Safety Promotion was held in the first week of December in Delhi, India. The week long course was organised by the Transportation Research and Injury Prevention Programme of the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, in collaboration with Department of Public Health Sciences, Karolinska Institute, Sweden. The course was sponsored by SIDA, Sweden, and WHO and attended by 26 participants from 11 countries. The faculty included Leif Svanström, Ragnar Andersson, and Karen Leander from the Karolinska Institute, Dinesh Mohan, Geetam Tiwari, Mathew Varghese, Iramana Qadere, and Rajesh Patel from IIT Delhi, and Larry Berger and Rick Smith from the USA.

DINESH MOHAN
Coordinator, Transportation Research and Injury Prevention Programmes; Head, WHO Collaborating Centre, Indian Institute of Technology; New Delhi
110016, India

A national meeting on guns and violence was also held in the U.S. on September 15, 2013. The meeting was held in Delhi, India and was attended by experts from China, Japan, and India. The course was sponsored by SIDA, Sweden, and WHO. The meeting was attended by 26 participants from 11 countries. The faculty included Leif Svanström, Ragnar Andersson, and Karen Leander from the Karolinska Institute, Dinesh Mohan, Geetam Tiwari, Mathew Varghese, Iramana Qadere, and Rajesh Patel from IIT Delhi, and Larry Berger and Rick Smith from the USA.

POLLY BIJUR
Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Rose P Kennedy Center, 1410 Rhine Hill Parkway South, Bronx, NY 10461, USA

Injuries to young men in Australia

The National Health and Medical Research Council has released a major study Unintentional Injury in Young Males, 15 to 29 Years. The terms of reference of the working group were to undertake a review of available data and contributory factors and to identify, review, and assess means of prevention. The report sets out the size and nature of the injury problem; the influences on injury, such as socio-cultural factors, alcohol, risk behaviour; countermeasures; policies for youth and injury; and recommendations.

The problem
- Young men have four times the rate of injury death and three times the rate of hospitalisation as young women the same age.
- Injury is responsible for 1600 deaths and 60 000 hospitalisations among these young men each year; death rates for all injuries are 77.8 per 100 000 and unintentional injury death 47.7 per 100 000;
- Transport is the leading cause of death (34.5 per 100 000), pharmaceuticals poisoning is next (3.2 per 100 000, one third the rate), and drowning close behind (3 per 100 000);
- Hospitalisations are caused by transport injury (rate of 684.5 per 100 000), falls (3 per 100 000) and poisonings (3 per 100 000);
- The leading causes of presentation to emergency department for injury are occupational injury and sports related injury;
- Those with higher injury risk rates are those in rural and remote areas, Aboriginal, and Torres Strait Islanders, and those in certain occupations such as farm workers, factory hands, plant operators, etc.;
Young indigenous males are more than twice as likely to die from injury as their non-indigenous counterparts.

Influences on injury risk

The reports that raised injury patterns and exposures outside the spectrum of causes and that the dominant cause of unintentional injury death, motor vehicle crashes, have been the subject of extensive intervention, but that other causes are not documented and associated with limited injury prevention activity.

The link between injury and lifestyle/behaviour and exposure to hazardous environments is reflected in the literature. A prior history of precipitants such as thrill seeking, poor risk perception, risky cultural norms, inexperience, stress, and alcohol consumption is known about but untangling how they operate together has not yet been done. Similarly it is known that there is an association between injury and socioeconomic and education disadvantage, but the details of how and why are unclear.

Strategies

The report analyses a range of interventions at the broad and the particular level that have been used to address injury. There is strong supportive evidence for the effectiveness of certain personal protective equipment in reducing injuries including seatbelts, motorcycle helmets, bicycle helmets, and eye protectors in squash. There are many strategies found to offer promise but for which current evidence is inadequate.

Conclusions

The report identifies a range of interventions that can be put in place, research and evaluation that needs to be undertaken, key policy and structural issues requiring attention, and the need for further development of prevention oriented surveillance of injury.

It is noted that important questions of how to address the issue of injury among young males remain to be answered and the need to work systematically to deal with research, implementation, and decision making infrastructure is stressed.

IAN SCOTT

Kidsafe Australia, 10th Floor, 123 Queen Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000, Australia

Youth suicide in New Zealand

There has been considerable concern in New Zealand in recent times over a jump in the suicide rate for young people in the 15–24 age group. The 1995 figure of 156 deaths represented a rise over the 137 in 1994, which itself was up on the stable figures (125 to 130 per year) of the preceding years. The rise was marked in young men aged 15–19 years and among women 15–24 years.

The age specific suicide rates in 1995 were: males 15–19 years 34.5 per 100 000; males 20–24 years 55.7, and total 15–24, 45.4 per 100 000. The figures for females were, respectively, 11.1, 14.6, and 12.9 per 100 000. Suicide is higher among Maori males 15–19 and lower among those aged 20–24 years.

The rise in suicides was the subject of much public discussion and lead to the formation of Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy, the introduction of a new mental health awareness curriculum in schools.

In the past the law has limited publication to name, address, and occupation. Since 1996 coroners have had discretion over the details permitted to be published concerning suicide, but this power is rarely used. Following a number of suicides some coroners have suggested that the practice should change because the right of the public to know and the usefulness of research outweigh the right of the grieving family to privacy.

DAVID CHALMERS

Injury Prevention Research Unit, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand

Safe medicines campaign in Glasgow

Greater Glasgow Health Board, the statutory organisation responsible for commissioning health services in Scotland’s largest city, became increasingly uneasy in 1997 at the rising tide of hospital admissions of children who had ingested medicines. In response, they launched an end of the year awareness raising campaign entitled “Youth Safety—Get the Medicine Out of Sights of Children”. The initiative aimed to focus on the dangers to children, particularly those under 5, of accidental poisoning and to promote the safe storage of medicines at home. A key message was that all children, regardless of social background, are potentially at risk. A packed press conference in November heard the head pharmacist of the Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Yorkhill, sheepishly confess that his own preschool child had found and swallowed some paracetamol tablets!

The campaign received widespread exposure in the local media, though its impact on the incidence of ingestions remains to be assessed. Health promotion and public relations experts drew their background information from a number of sources including the recently published Yorkhill version of the Canadian Hospitals Injury Reporting and Prevention Program (CHIRPP). CHIRPP was able to confirm a real rise in children presenting to the accident and emergency department with ingestions rather than simply an increasing tendency of clinicians to admit such children to the inpatient wards. CHIRPP will also doubtless prove an invaluable means of evaluating the success of the campaign. This has yet again highlighted the crucial importance of having an efficient local injury surveillance on hand to provide appropriate information to safety professionals.

DAVID STONE

The PEACH Unit, Department of Child Health, Yorkhill Hospital, Glasgow G3 8SF, UK

Southern Africa report

One aspect of paediatric trauma medicine that really appealed to me when I entered this field just over 10 years ago, was the challenge of non-operative management of blunt injuries. Like most colleagues, I certainly have no deep aversion to the blood spattered, adrenalin rich milieu of emergency surgery, but when working in adult trauma units, I had the endless routine of operating on victims of gunshot and knife attacks both predictable and depressing. At Red Cross Children’s Hospital, my happy experience has been to deal mostly with blunt injuries, usually the result of falls or traffic collisions, and where clinical diagnostic ability and the art of multi-disciplinary management are more important than speed of surgical delivery. In the last weeks and in spite of government efforts to control handgun ownership (as outlined in my last report), I have had no choice but to dust off my scalpel, don the bloodproof apparel known as “universal precautions”, and spend long hours in the operating room repairing the ugly damage caused by flying bullets—always uglier when it lacerates the flesh of young children. In preparation for this summer holiday season, I have restocked my unit with large bore chest drain catheters, high flow intravenous infusion sets, instrument packs for resuscitative thoracotomy, and an autotransfusion device—all of which behind years ago at the adult hospitals where knife and gunshot wounds are pretty much stock-in-trade. With heavy hearts, my staff and I roll out the red carpet for a new problem in the field of childhood injury—weapon violence. Initiatives still struggle to make an impression on the old ones.

The official South African figures for road traffic injury in 1997 are horrifying: 517 669 collisions, 22 757 serious injuries, and 5146 deaths. Against this doom and gloom, the “Arrive Alive” traffic safety campaign launched countrywide throughout South Africa two months ago looks to be doing that business. In the course of regular weekend “blitzes” in the Western Cape alone, 87 000 motorists have been fined for a variety of misdemeanours, and the number fined for driving under the influence of alcohol (total = 887) has dropped dramatically. Although 9508 fines were handed out in the same period for failure to wear seatbelts, there has not been a single conviction for failure to restrain children, most likely because South African laws governing use of child restraints are too anaemic to be worth enforcing.

CAPFFSA hopes to make a worthwhile contribution to child passenger safety in 1998 by launching a long overdue child safety restraint loan scheme based in Cape Town. In reaching this point, our sincere thanks go out to all our sister organisations who inundated us with invaluable literature accumulated in the course of setting up similar schemes in their own centres.

Lastly, Victor Nel and colleagues at the University of South Africa are to be congratulated for convening the successful SAFE-COMM6 meeting at Eldorado Park in October 1997. The African continent in particular was well represented in terms of delegates and subject matter, as befits a meeting entitled “Consolidating communities against violence”.

DAVID BASS

Department of Paediatric Surgery, Red Cross War Memorial Children’s Hospital, Rondebosch 7700, South Africa

PEDNET

A recurring theme among pedestrian advocates is the lack of anger at pedestrian injuries, and the tendency to blame the victim, especially children, for their injuries.
Sally Flocks reported on a 4 year old killed on an Atlanta residential street. The child was struck by a police officer speeding at 45 mph for no apparent reason. (The officer has been charged with vehicular homicide.) Two years ago, the neighborhood requested traffic calming for that particular street but the City turned them down. Curiously, the mayor said at the funeral “in many ways, this is the worst kind of tragedy, because we have no one to be angry with”. Sally said that before the mayor’s request, she had two places to target her anger, but now she has three. Mike Mott suggested a fourth target for Sally’s anger—“NHTSA, that spends millions to protect those inside a vehicle and nothing to protect those outside the vehicle”.

While that comment may be a slight exaggeration, the US government policy toward childhood pedestrian injuries appears to focus on altering the child’s behavior. PEDNETers pointed out that the action of the child results in prevention programs misdirecting their efforts. Pediatric advocates believe much more effort is needed in making the streets safer for children.

PETER JACOBSEN
PO Box 712433, Los Angeles, CA 90071-7433, USA


LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Fatal and non-fatal farm injuries

EASTON,—In a recent issue of Injury Prevention, in an article on fatal and non-fatal farm injuries, the organization Farm Safety 4 Just Kids is mentioned as an example of a grassroots group working on children’s farm safety. Dr Rivara is a fine researcher, and has worked with Farm Safety 4 Just Kids on other analyses, and we are glad that you published his article.

The board of directors of Farm Safety 4 Just Kids, however, asks to be placed on record with your journal to explain the last phrase in paragraph 2 of the introduction: “Grassroots groups, such as Farm Safety 4 Just Kids, have been formed to increase public awareness of the magnitude of the problem, conduct public education, and lobby for legislation and regulation”. Lobbying for legislation and regulation is an activity that, while not prohibited by our non-profit 501 c3 status, has not been a major component of our work. The Farm Safety 4 Just Kids board of directors has been sensitive to the variety of mixed reactions and opinions there are to such activities as legislation and regulation by an organization that is working directly with farm families.

Thank you for allowing us to further explain our organization in addition to the information included by Dr Rivara.

MARTHA S CLINE
Executive Director, Farm Safety 4 Just Kids, 110 South Chestnut Avenue, Earlham, IA 50072, USA


BOOK REVIEWS

Child Development and the Aims of Road Safety Education—A Review and Analysis. By J A Thomson, A Tolmie, H C Foot, and B McLaren. (Pp 131; £19.00.)


This book challenges the widely held views in road safety that young children are biologically incapable of coping with the road environment, until an appropriate stage of psychological development is reached. It thus provides an informative framework for a debate on the aims and objectives of road safety education and usefully contributes to the debate on the relative role of education, engineering and urban planning methods in injury prevention.

The report was commissioned by the Department of Transport from a team of developmental psychologists at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland. The first author, James Thomson has been actively involved in the development and evaluation of both experimental and operational road safety programmes, but the report ranges widely than the authors’ own programmes.

The book comprises five main sections: (1) aims and objectives of road safety education, (2) current methods employed in road safety education, (3) theories relating to child development, (4) implications of these theories for training, and (5) conclusions and recommendations. A clear and concise executive summary is provided and useful summary sections for each chapter. The biography of 220 references draws widely from the field of development psychology. One criticism here is that more attention is given to the road safety literature from Europe than from the USA or Australia. The report, however, usefully summarises the developmental psychologist perspective on this issue, is (thankfully) free from jargon, and very clearly written. It provides much of some scholarship and careful argument.

The aims and objectives of current road safety education are explored in chapter 1. What emerges is the lack of concrete objectives in most programmes. Even when more precise objectives are defined, the majority are concerned with knowledge and attitude change, rather than behaviour. As there are no direct links between knowledge change and behaviour the validity of road safety education can be questioned. The authors go on to analyse different components of the complex pedestrian task: detecting the presence of traffic, making visual timing judgments, coordinating information from different directions, and coordinating perception and action. They discuss how such skills develop in children and the level of skills that can be expected in children of different ages. They cite convincing evidence that children’s performance on a range of clearly defined pedestrian skills can be accelerated, providing appropriate training is given.

The issue of appropriate training is examined in chapter 2. A useful distinction is made between the content of a programme and the methods employed: programmes can fail if the content is inappropriate and/or if the methods are inappropriate. What methods have been used in this field? Classroom based verbal methods, books and printed materials, films and videos, and practical training are all analysed. An interesting observation is that video techniques can offer greater flexibility than films, particularly if they are tailored to children’s own locality and incorporate children as subjects. The feedback capabilities of such local videos may be worth exploring further.

But the report particularly favours the use of practical skills training, involving
active behavioural participation and their arguments is convincing.

“Skiing or swimming, driving or learning to ride a bike all require practical experience: no-one has ever learned to do these things just sitting at a desk. Yet this is precisely how we expect young children to cross the road” (p 99).

Chapter 3 provides the theoretical underpinning of why practical skills training is effective, concentrating in particular on the theories of J J Gibson, Jean Piaget, and L S Vygotsky. Skills and strategies cannot be taught solely by verbal means but need to be built up from their constituent behaviours. There is strong evidence that learning is more flexible than earlier theories supposed, particularly when appropriate interventions are employed and the authors conclude that appropriate training could begin as early as 4 years of age.

The implications of child development theory for training are discussed in chapter 4, with peer tutoring, adult led training, and peer collaboration being considered. The first two of these methods stem from a Vygotskian approach and are likely to be best suited to the younger children and strategies. Peer collaboration, on the other hand, is more in line with Piagetian theory and would appear to be more useful in the provision of conceptual understanding. The authors believe that successful training needs to include both approaches.

The final chapter summarises the context of the report and produces a range of recommendations for both practical training and for future research.

One reservation about the report is that it is not overly systematic: it does not set out its criteria for the way its evidence was obtained nor its inclusion criteria for how studies were selected. Is there a literature that does not exist? Does the report and produces a range of recommendations for both practical training and for future research.

Childhood injury prevention requires input from a wide range of disciplines and this contribution from the developmental psychology field is a useful addition to the literature, particular learning of skills and strategies. Peer collaboration, on the other hand, is more in line with Piagetian theory and would appear to be more useful in the provision of conceptual understanding. The authors believe that successful training needs to include both approaches.

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innumerate (as, incredibly, Greenhalgh herself professes to be!). Several of the chapters that follow are variations on these themes. The chapter on drug self-profession is an excellent example of this. Innumerate (as, incredibly, Greenhalgh her-

The International Society for Child and Adolescent Injury Prevention (ISCAIP)

ISCAIP invites you to attend a one day conference, the 3rd ISCAIP Conference on Childhood Injury following the 4th International Conference on Injury Prevention and Control:

RAI Conference Centre, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Thursday, 21 May 1998, 9:30 am–5:00 pm

The program will focus attention on childhood injury in Europe, child occupant protection, and making regulation work. In addition, a debate on intentional injury and ISCAIP is scheduled for the final plenary. We are also offering the opportunity for registrants to submit commentaries to be included in the conference discussions.

Attendance fee: £35 ISCAIP members; £75 non-ISCAIP members

If you would like to receive further information and a registration form, please fax or e-mail Angela Seay, ISCAIP Administrator, c/o CAPT, 18–20 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, UK (fax: +44 171 608 3674, e-mail: aseay@compuserve.com).

Conference Secretariat ICCHO '98, c/o VVVA Conference Services, PO Box 8153, 3503 RD Utrecht, The Netherlands (fax: +31 30 246 4674, e-mail: congress@vvva.nl).


6–13 December 1998. International Course on Prevention and Control of Road Traffic Accidents and Injuries, New Delhi, India. The course is being organised by Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi and INRETS, France. Further details: Coordinator, Transportation and Traffic Injury Prevention Programme, Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi 110016, India (fax: +91 11 685 8703, e-mail: mahesh@chme.iedt.inert.in).


12–16 April 1999. XVth World Congress on Occupational Safety and Health, São Paulo, Brazil. Further details: XV Congresso Mun-

Methods


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General

Anonymous. Role of emergency physicians in the prevention of pediatric injury. Ameri-


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School

Injury prevention

Sports and recreation

Injury prevention
Jones AL. To guard is hotter than to heal—the prevention of accidental poisoning and injury of children. Int J Clin Pract 1997;51:268–70.

Drowning

Violence and suicide