WHO UPDATE.....

New international effort to prevent child and adolescent injuries

Despite being responsible for at least 875 000 deaths and associated with up to 40% of deaths in children and adolescents, injuries and violence are underrecognized as threats to children and the resources available for analysis and prevention bear no relation to the size of the problem. Although much has been achieved in child injury prevention in many high income countries, most low and middle income countries have not yet recognized child injury as an issue and most have limited capacity to take preventive action.

As a first step towards improving child injury prevention at a global level, WHO and UNICEF cohosted an expert meeting in March 2005 to find out what needed to be done. Delegates strongly affirmed the need to take action at both the international and regional levels. There was broad support for immediate action to increase the visibility of child injury and for the development of a "World Report" on child injury and prevention as a mechanism to improve the level and effectiveness of injury prevention effort. The discussion also assisted WHO in the development of a strategic plan of work relating to child injury.

The consultation spawned a number of projects. A joint WHO-UNICEF advocacy document, *Child and adolescent injury prevention: a global call to action*, was published in October 2005. This short document makes the case for child injury prevention, arguing that many children die unnecessarily from injuries and violence every day; that developing

countries bear a disproportionate share of the problem (95% of the deaths occur in low and middle income countries); that injuries and violence can be prevented; and that political commitment and resources are needed to change things.

Child and adolescent injury prevention: a WHO plan of action was launched in March 2006. This document, which gives guidance to WHO and collaborators on the way forward over the next 10 years, focuses on six areas of work: data measurement, research, prevention, services for children affected by injury and violence, capacity development, and advocacy. In particular, it highlights areas where WHO, working with its partners and interested groups, has the potential to make a difference in child injury prevention.

Work is currently under way on a *World report on child and adolescent injury prevention*, a joint WHO and UNICEF document which will involve many experts from around the world. Following the model and success of previous world reports: the *World report on violence and health* and the *World report on road traffic injury prevention*, the child injury prevention report will assist in: getting child injury on the policy agenda; widening the provision of information on effective action that would prevent injury; identifying existing gaps in knowledge and action; stimulating an increase in the response of health systems to injury; and encouraging an increase in research into child injury topics.

The report will be concerned with children under 18 years of age and focus primarily on unintentional injuries. An overview will set out the magnitude, pattern, implications, and effect of child injury globally as well as the nature and success of prevention efforts. Child injury will be contextualized within a broader area of child survival and unintentional injury within the spectrum of intent, acknowledging the broad grey area of uncertainty. There will be chapters on specific topics: burns and scalds, falls, drowning, road traffic injuries, and poisoning and a final chapter that will bring together the main messages of the report and offer some conclusions and recommendations. Work on the report is being directed by an Advisory and an Editorial Board and individual chapters developed by lead authors and working groups. Once drafted, chapters and recommendations will be the subject of regional consultation and expert review. The final document will be translated into the United Nations languages and will be launched, with an implementation strategy, in mid 2008.

For further information please contact Ian Scott (scotti@who.int) or go to http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/child_injuries/en/ where all WHO's documents on child injury prevention can be found.

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