

Injury research: a perspective from the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

In 1985 the Institute of Medicine report *Injury in America* recommended that a centre for injury control be established at the Centers for Disease Control and that funding for research on injury should be commensurate with its public health burden.¹ In 1992 the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC) was created at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), setting up a federal organisation whose sole focus is on injury—preventing injury and mitigating the consequences of injuries, using a public health approach to research and practice. Since then the USA has made significant progress in decreasing injury-related death and disability while continuing to develop a national infrastructure to support these efforts. Much of this progress has been done with little fanfare, working with our partners to translate evidence-based strategies to help communities and change environments, practice and policy. The nature of these efforts is exemplified in David Hemenway's recent book *While We Were Sleeping* which documents successful initiatives in injury prevention, such as the change in temperature controls on water heaters so that far fewer children are burned in bathtubs by water that is too hot.²

Despite this progress, we still face many challenges in injury prevention, including identifying successful strategies that are scalable. In the USA we still see over 180 000 deaths from injury each year, and millions of hospitalisations and emergency department visits for the treatment of injury.³ There are untold numbers of both short-term and long-term injury-related disability, all of which result in increasing healthcare costs, lost productivity, family changes and community impacts. The network of CDC-funded Injury Control Research Centers, located in academic centres, together with non-CDC-funded Injury Centers and other injury researchers, continue to grow the evidence base and educate students and practitioners in the science of injury prevention and control. NCIPC has provided research grants that have advanced the science and seeded the careers of many scientists in the field of injury and violence prevention. Translation of research into practice has occurred at the national, state and local levels through practice change, policy initiatives and environmental interventions. Injury prevention programmes located in state health departments funded through the CDC continue to be leaders in translating effective interventions into practice. Many local health departments are also using the evidence to decrease injury in the communities that they serve.

Injury remains a significant public health problem as it is the leading cause of death for persons in the USA aged 1–44 years.³ So while we celebrate our successes in injury prevention, we also

need to look at our next steps and identify how we can be effective in continuing to address this problem. At NCIPC we continue to focus on the injury problems that have the highest burden or are growing most rapidly. These foci include the prevention of motor vehicle injury traumatic brain injury, violence against children and youth, and prescription opioid overdoses which recently have been increasing dramatically across the nation. Also, translation of research into practice is supported in preventing falls in older adults, intimate partner violence, sexual violence as well as sports and recreation-related injuries. Despite prevention, if persons are injured it is important to determine system strategies that are cost-effective and reduce the morbidity from those injuries, both on day-to-day and mass casualty events including terrorism.

We still face the challenge of people who, despite the morbidity and mortality from injury, do not accept that injury is a public health problem. This belief exists both within the field of public health and outside it. The injury prevention research field is vibrant with unsung heroes dedicated to ensuring that people have opportunities to live safely and to be as healthy as possible for as long as possible. We have demonstrated through research that public health approaches to preventing injury and violence are effective as a part of comprehensive strategies to keep people safe, healthy and productive. Through investment in research and in translation of that research into practice, we can achieve our vision of making injury and violence prevention the public health achievement of this decade.

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Competing interests None.

Provenance and peer review Not commissioned; internally peer reviewed.

Published Online First 25 August 2011

Injury Prevention 2011;**17**:357. doi:10.1136/injuryprev-2011-040167

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Inj Prev 2011 17: 357 originally published online August 25, 2011
doi: 10.1136/injuryprev-2011-040167

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