



Strategies and Best Practices for the Reduction of Injuries

Press Release: 9 October, 2008

The European Code Against Injuries (ECAI)

ECAI is the first awareness raising tool for injury prevention and safety promotion in the European Union. Simple, appealing and straight-forward messages that, if adopted, could save thousands of lives

Each year, injuries claim the lives of over 250,000 European Union citizens. In other words, **by the end of this day, accidental injuries alone will claim the lives of another 450 EU co-citizens¹**. More importantly, injuries are responsible for a substantial proportion of premature mortality as they are the number one killer of children, adolescents, and young adults.

Only cardiovascular diseases, cancer and diseases of the respiratory system surpass this toll, with injuries being the 4th most common cause of death in the EU population.

Injury-related deaths represent just the tip of the iceberg. It has been estimated that **for each death due to accidental injury another 30 citizens are hospitalized -- amounting a total of 7.5 million hospitalizations -- and another 200 --- amounting a total of 50 million European-wide --- are so severely injured that seek care in hospital emergency departments**. Indeed, non-fatal injuries claim more years of full health and of quality of life due to disability than any other cause of morbidity in the European Union².

Injuries are not due to chance, however. By contrast, they are mostly foreseeable and easily preventable. It has been estimated that ~74,000 lives out of the total "accidental" injury deaths occurring in the EU each year, could have been saved, if all Member States adopted policies and practices implemented in the EU countries which enjoy the best injury prevention records.

Thus, nearly half of the total unintentional injury-related deaths each year could be prevented.

A considerable variation in injury mortality rates is observed among EU Member States. Some of the new member states such as Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and Hungary have the highest injury mortality rates, whereas others such as **UK, the Netherlands, Germany and Sweden seem to be safer places to live**.

Simple, effective practices could save as many as 2,000 lives among children, 42,000 among adults and 30,000 among older EU citizens.

This is what ECAI, which is launched today at the 2nd European Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion in Paris, is aiming to: offer the EU citizen simple and comprehensive recommendations on how to avoid the risk of an injury and promote the safety of himself/herself and his/hers beloved.

ECAI messages cover a wide spectrum of daily aspects, in which an injury can occur, while urge individuals to adopt safer behaviours. For the preparation of ECAI messages, the most up-to-date, valid and efficient knowledge and prevention strategies have been used. It is hoped that ECAI will provide a valuable tool in raising people's awareness on injury prevention and decreasing the burden of unintentional injuries across Europe.

ECAI was developed by the Centre for Research and Prevention of Injuries (CE.RE.PR.I), Athens University Medical School in collaboration with renown injury prevention experts from all over the EU, within the framework of the EC co-financed APOLLO project ('Strategies and Best Practices for the Reduction of Injuries').

APOLLO project leader, Professor Eleni Petridou from Greece, said: "The ECAI is a breakthrough in injury prevention activities. Our previous experience with the European Code Against Cancer was very welcomed and had a great impact in reducing cancer mortality. Following our enthusiasm, we wanted to expand this effective measure in tackling injury-related deaths. Now that the ECAI is launched, we believe that it has all good prospects to follow in the footsteps of the European Code Against Cancer."

ECAI has already been translated in 11 European languages and is available online at: <http://www.euroipn.org/apollo/WP3.htm> as well in printed copies (apollo@med.uoa.gr)

Notes

1. Injury Statistics Portal. Mortality Data. Center for Research and Prevention of Injuries(CEREPRI). http://www.euroipn.org/stats_portal/
2. Peden M, McGee K, Krug E (Eds). Injury: A leading cause of the global burden of disease, 2000. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2002.
3. Petridou ET, Killekidis S, Jeffrey S, et al. Unintentional injury mortality in the European Union: how many more lives could be saved? Scand J Public Health 2007;35:278-87.

For further information please contact:

Evi Germeni

Center for Research and Prevention of Injuries (CEREPRI)

Dept.of Hygiene, Epidemiology and Medical Statistics

Athens University Medical School

75, Mikras Asias str.

11527 Athens, Greece

tel. +30 210 7462219, +30 6955 499304

email. egermeni@med.uoa.gr

