

6<sup>th</sup> WORLD CONFERENCE

Injury Prevention  
and Control

6<sup>e</sup> CONFÉRENCE MONDIALE

Prévention et contrôle  
des traumatismes

**ABSTRACTS • RÉSUMÉS**

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MAY 12 TO 15, 2002

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## **ABSTRACTS • RÉSUMÉS**

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INJURIES, SUICIDE AND VIOLENCE:

Building Knowledge, Policies

and Practices to Promote a Safer World

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TRAUMATISMES, SUICIDE ET VIOLENCE :

Construire un savoir, des politiques

et des pratiques pour promouvoir

un monde en sécurité

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## **OCCUPATIONAL INJURY SURVEILLANCE IN THE US: WHERE WE ARE AND WHERE WE NEED TO GO**

DAWN N. CASTILLO

CDC / NIOSH

Morgantown, WV, USA

**PROBLEM UNDER STUDY:** Occupational injury surveillance—a critical tool for guiding research and prevention efforts—in the U.S.

**METHOD OR APPROACH:** NIOSH conducted a needs assessment of surveillance in the areas of occupational injuries, illnesses, and hazards. External input was sought from numerous

experts and stakeholders. Gaps were identified and goals set for developing more comprehensive surveillance systems in the next decade. These goals were articulated in a NIOSH Strategic Surveillance Plan.

**RESULTS:** Occupational injury surveillance in the U.S. is based on a patchwork of data and systems. These systems include national occupational fatality surveillance systems, an employer-based survey, and data from samples of emergency departments. There have been recent efforts to collect data on childhood agricultural injuries in response to a larger effort to prevent these injuries. These data are collected by multiple federal agencies including the Department of Labour, NIOSH, the Department of Agriculture, and the National Centre for Health Statistics. These data have been effective in identifying trends over time at the national level, and identifying groups of workers experiencing large numbers and high rates of injuries. These data have been used to guide research and prevention efforts. There are a number of gaps in the national system of occupational injury data, however. A number of worker groups are inadequately represented in existing surveillance data, including hard reaching populations such as migrant and seasonal workers. This limits the ability to assess injury risk for these groups, as well as to develop promising prevention programs. Much occupational injury surveillance data derives from existing records, such as medical and employer records, which are of variable quality. Data on exposure to injury hazards is virtually nonexistent, but could add to the arsenal of tools in identifying high-risk workplaces. The information age poses both challenges and opportunities to ensure that data are accessible and useful to individuals in a position to target research and prevention efforts. There is considerable variability in levels of occupational injury surveillance among states, as well as use of data to guide prevention efforts. State health agencies are especially suited to collecting detailed information not feasible at the national level, and for undertaking preventive efforts based on the injury data. Most of the U.S. occupational injury surveillance systems provide data at the regional or state-level, though the data are limited and frequently insufficient for guiding state-level prevention efforts. Several states have specific programs to collect occupational injury data, ranging from programs to conduct in-depth investigations of occupational injury fatalities to programs targeted to specific injury types or worker groups.

**CONCLUSION:** This patchwork of data and surveillance systems have documented U.S. trends in occupational injuries, and identified injury problems requiring additional research and prevention efforts. Despite these accomplishments, there are substantial gaps in occupational injury surveillance and related activities. Priorities for future surveillance include: activities to improve data quality, development of new and improved surveillance methods, hazard surveillance, surveillance targeted to high risk groups, expanding the capacity for state-level surveillance and prevention efforts, and efforts to increase accessibility and use of surveillance data.

**LIMITS:** The NIOSH Strategic Surveillance Plan provides broad guidance for moving forward in the U.S. Detailed action steps remain to be developed, and budgetary constraints will likely limit progress. The plan is specific to occupational injury surveillance systems and data in the USA, and is shaped by the NIOSH mission and program.

**CONTRIBUTION OF THE PROJECT TO THE FIELD:** Many of the occupational injury surveillance gaps in the USA likely exist in other developed nations. Other countries may benefit from lessons learned in the U.S., and future progress.