

## References .....

1. Accidental death and disability: the neglected disease of modern society. National Research Council, Washington, DC, 1966.
2. Committee on Trauma Research of the National Research Council: Injury in America: a continuing public health problem. National Academy Press, Washington, DC, 1985.

### One Fine Solution to the Injury Problem

Injury makes the news every night. The national networks never fail to devote at least one story to injury, but the broadcast coverage comes into our homes on the local news day after day: fires, crashes, muggings, murders, suicides, and drownings. This is injury, termed by the National Academy of Sciences as the leading public health problem in the United States today. Yet, despite the devastatingly high toll it takes from our society, injury remains an area that is largely unappreciated by the health community and underfunded in terms of research and prevention. Why this disparity between the attention we give to injury as a news event and the lack of attention we give it as a public health problem?

The first explanation is a conceptual barrier: We tend to think of injuries as "accidents," random events that occur by chance, unrelated to anything we do, or could do. We are starting to learn otherwise. We are learning that we can save thousands of lives by building more crash-worthy cars, by wearing seatbelts, and by reducing drunk driving. But, we would be even further ahead if we stopped using the word "accident" and substituted injury. Let us not underestimate the power of a word. Look at the effect, for example, of the term "recreational drugs." Substance abuse kills thousands of people each year, many through fatal injuries related to motor vehicles or firearms. Is not the term "recreational drug" an oxymoron? Is not "accident"?

The second explanation for our lack of progress in injury control is that there has not been a coordinated effort to unite and lead the field toward a common goal. Disparate groups have attacked different types of injuries at various times, but there has not been an identified field of injury control nor an identified discipline of injury control practitioners. This is going to change. The

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has been designated as the lead agency for injury control, and the 1987 Conference on Injury in America was CDC's coming out party. In partnership with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, CDC plans to make this national injury conference an annual event where the formerly disparate groups and isolated individuals come together to share information and develop common strategies and approaches. The second annual conference on Injury in America will be held September 14-16, 1988, in Seattle, WA.

We have also adopted a fine approach to overcoming the conceptual barrier to injury control. Anyone caught using the term "accident" to refer to an injury will be fined 25 cents. The fine will be payable by the honor system, mailed to me at our newly renamed center at CDC. Even if only a few of us are honest and abide by our honor system, we will markedly improve the status of funding for injury research.

And what is the new name of our center at CDC? As of August, we became the Center for Environmental Health and Injury Control. And that, my friends, was no accident.

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