

The objective was initially based on data from the 1976-80 Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (HANES) II survey. The 24-hour dietary recall component of this survey found the mean daily sodium consumption to be about 2.3 grams for females (range for 18-74-year-olds: 1.9-2.3 grams) and about 3.3 grams for males (range for 18-74-year-olds: 2.9-4.1 grams). It should, however, also be noted that the midcourse review recently completed for the high blood pressure component of the 1990 objectives suggests that a sodium target as low as 1.2-2.4 grams daily may not be necessary for the entire population. The issue is currently under study.

*J. Michael McGinnis, MD
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health
Disease Prevention and Health Promotion*

Injuries Are Not Accidents

I was particularly pleased to see so much of the November-December 1985 issue of the *Public Health Reports* devoted to the subject of injuries. It is evidence of the enormous commitment and responsibility of *Public Health Reports* in promoting injury prevention.

After so many years of trying to sensitize the public health community to the fact that injuries are not "accidents," it seems ironic that an editorial coauthored by Michael K. Gemmell, Executive Director, Association of Schools of Public Health, and myself should appear in *Public Health Reports* with the title "The Possible Dream: Accident Prevention and Injury Control—A Conference to Chart Advances and Plan Strategy." In truth, injuries are not accidents. They occur all too

predictably and in repetitive patterns.

The Carter Center of Emory University stated that if we apply what we know about injury prevention, motor vehicle-related injuries and their attendant costs could be reduced by 75 percent and home-based injuries by 50 percent. Yet injury prevention has not ranked high in the hierarchy of public health priorities. I think it stems, in large part, from the common misconception that injuries are random events beyond our control. I also believe that the term "accident" reinforces that misconception and makes it difficult to convince the public that successful intervention strategies can be applied. For this reason, I prefer not to use the word "accident" when discussing injuries.

The title of our editorial was inspired by the Assistant Secretary for Health's report "Promoting Health/Preventing Disease: Objectives for the Nation," which had an objective titled Accident Prevention and Control (1). After seeing it in print, we realize that the editorial's title was a mistake. I can assure you that we won't make that mistake again. . . it was an accident. It seems that all of us at some time have been caught.

*Vernon N. Houk, MD
Assistant Surgeon General
Director
Center for Environmental Health
Centers for Disease Control*

Reference.....

1. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health: Promoting health/preventing disease: objectives for the nation. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1980.

Today no health professional Gets far
Without a Well-furnished Mind.

Let **Public Health Reports** keep you
posted on new policies and important
findings in your field.

If you now see **PHR** only irregularly,
why not subscribe? Use the order
blank on page 228.

