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Use of preventive measures of childhood injuries at household level: community-based findings from Nepal

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Background:
Child injuries are a major public health problem in low- and middle-income countries but they are not recognised at policy or community level. Prevention of injuries is neglected due to lack of awareness. The perception that ‘injuries cannot be predicted’ is deeply rooted which impedes the use of active measures of prevention. Above all, natural locations, physical structures and lack of resources also hinder the culture of safety promotion in rural Nepal.

Objective:
To explore the practice of safety measures applied by the household after childhood injury among the survey households of Makwanpur.

Method:
A community-based household survey was conducted in 3,441 households in Makwanpur district during Dec 2010-Feb2011. The respondents of the households in which an injured child was found were asked ‘what did they do for preventing injuries in future?’ The responses were noted verbatim. Analysis of the free-text information about the preventive measures was utilised to explore perceived risk factors, the types of preventive measures and implications for injury prevention intervention.

Results:
- Although 60% HHs applied preventive measures only 23% of them applied active measures i.e. supervision and environmental change.
- The use of safety measures for child injuries were significantly different across the geographical regions.
- The instructions were directed both towards parents (under 10 years) and the children (over 10 years).
- Children’s cognitive development, use of safety equipment and structure of house were among the least expressed concern.
- Lack of children’s supervision and their behaviours were perceived to be the risk factors by about two-thirds of the survey households.

Types of safety measures by the households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Safety measures</th>
<th>HH (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instruction to parents</td>
<td>41 (38.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction to child</td>
<td>28 (26.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson – Supervision</td>
<td>11 (10.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson – Precaution</td>
<td>2 (1.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action – Education</td>
<td>11 (10.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action - modified environment/behaviour</td>
<td>8 (7.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action – Supervision</td>
<td>5 (4.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>106 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion:
Important issues in terms of developing community-based injury prevention intervention were evolved when analysing the spirit and language of the responses. Lack of supervision of children was a major issue (36%) followed by home safety (12%), child labour and awareness related (9% each). Taking these factors into account for developing a child injury prevention intervention could be highly effective.

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