

(1179) From Limited Firearms Injury Data To Policy Action: An Example From El Salvador

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PROBLEM

Firearm violence is very common in El Salvador due to readily available sources of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). El Salvador went through a 12-year period of civil war which led to deaths and morbidity among citizens. Firearm violence threatens peace and stability, development, democracy and human rights apart from having severe public health consequences. According to the World Bank, direct and indirect costs of firearm misuse account for around 140 and 170 Million US Dollars per annum. Health workers and health institutions are witnesses to some of this violence as they take care of the injured and dead. Health workers in El Salvador studied the Public Health Dimensions of SALW Violence with a view to informing policy changes .

OBJECTIVES

To understand, from a scientific perspective, the violence phenomena, especially the consequences of small arms misuse through research and medical epidemiology, using health data/approach for better policies.

To take an active part and provide a public health view on political and health interventions, and to construct a program to control small arms violence and its effects.

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To promote the participation of health workers and general society in order to prevent violence through an educative, promotional, and organizational program.

Actions included Compilation of data of victims of small arms wounds from Central Archive of Rosales Hospital, Hospital Estimate of Economical Costs due to their medical attention for Health System and Salvadoran Society. Monitoring of children firearm wound cases admitted to the main children hospital in 2004. Researchers on the field were trained to identify the profile of victims of non-lethal wounds.

METHOD

Prospective data collection between 1999 -2 004 from Medical records at the country's main Hospital (Comunicando Mejor Salud, DHF de New York).

RESULTS

The number medical students involved, increased in the number of activities at the National University and the mobilization of Medical Students to develop interventions.

Gun law modifications and public politics address to control guns.

Management of admissions victims of small arms wounds (accordingly the economical costs showed in the research)

Participation in different conferences as speakers, including the introduction of the issue into other disciplines (Medical Students Congress, Health

Sector, Public Security, Central American film.

Media articles using our data and activities to address the issue.

Period of time which the movement achieved a political interest. •

Impact of the activities on the Ministry of Health

El Salvadoran Government banned the use of firearms in public places and established a fund to help victims of firearm violence. The Ministry of Health has now prioritised firearm injuries and allocated a specific budget to it.

CONCLUSION

Using limited data, health workers in El Salvador helped their Government to change policy, help victims by establishing a special fund for victims, raised public and media awareness among other things