

## **(952) Effective Data For Policy Change And Interventions: Mbale Hospital Small Firearms Injury Study**

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### **PROBLEM**

Uganda has had armed conflicts in the last 40 years after independence. In the last 20 years, however, most of the armed conflicts have been in the north, north east, and during certain period of time, in the south western part of the country. Small arms contribute to the misery of the populations in these areas. Many people have been killed, maimed, traumatised, disabled and psychologically tortured. This study in Mbale was set out to understand the burden of disease caused by small arms injuries in the eastern region, home for about four million Ugandans.

### **OBJECTIVES**

To determine burden of disease due to small arms injuries in Mbale hospital in the year 2004.  
To generate information for advocacy work on public health effects of small arms.

### **METHOD**

**METHODS:** Medical record or chart review was done for the patients treated for small firearm injuries in Mbale hospital in a one year period (January – December, 2004).

The data were collected using a questionnaire developed to address the indicators for a minimum data set for the purpose of the objectives above. The data collected were on bed occupancy, cost of treatment, deaths, circumstances of injury, anatomical site of injury, social class of injured, patient load in the surgical ward and outcome of the injury. The data were analysed using EPI INFO 2002. Ethical clearance to conduct data collection was obtained from hospital authorities.

### **RESULTS**

There were fewer patients due to small arms compared to other injuries. The length of stay in hospital was longer for small arms injury patients compared to the rest of injuries, the outcome was either disability or death and the cost of treatment in hospital was higher for small arms injuries compared to other types of injuries. The socio-economic effects of small arms injuries to the hospital, family of the victim and victim were enormous.

### **CONCLUSION**

Small arms injuries in Mbale hospital are fewer compared to the other types of injuries seen in surgical department but the impact and effects of the small arms injuries to the health system and patients were more than those for any other type of injuries. These types of injuries are preventable. Primary prevention through policy and small arms control is not only feasible but within reach.

**KEY WORDS:** small arms, burden of disease, injury, socio-economic, primary prevention and policy