

Title: Preventing accidents in children using community based experience

Author: Astrid Valenzuela, M.D.

Context and setting: In Chile, the leading cause of death in children after the first year of life is accidental injuries. Most of them can be prevented. Most of them occur at home.

Why change was necessary: Universidad del Desarrollo has a traditional lecture based curriculum and clinical practice is done at the hospital. Until 2007 childhood injury prevention has been taught as a 45 minute didactic lecture. Since attendance at lectures is voluntary and the hospital setting is not the best place to analyze risk factors, many of the students will graduate without truly understanding this important issue.

The purpose of this project was to ensure that students acquire knowledge about injury prevention in the appropriate context and so to increase their motivation and effectiveness in counseling while working with the community.

What was done? Two small discussion groups' sessions regarding health monitoring and the importance of counseling were conducted. A guided visit to a day care center was organized with groups of 28 students each to observe injury prevention strategies. Finally students were divided in 12 groups to make three home visits in a poor quarter of the Santiago community. The first was to assess risks at home, the second to inform the parents about the risks they found and how they could prevent them in a realistic way according to their socioeconomic possibilities, and the third to verify changes made by the families.

Evaluation of the results and impact: Evaluation of the learning intervention was performed using a students' self-report questionnaire which addressed their perception of the experience. 21 of 26 respondent students agreed (A) or strongly agreed (SA) that this method allowed them to acquire knowledge more effectively than lectures. 25 of 26 agreed (A) or (SA) that this method was better for understanding psychosocial issues. However, 13 of 26 thought that the community did not benefit from the visits simply because time was too short and 2 students volunteered to continue to work in the project.

Evaluation of parents' satisfaction was performed using an interview questionnaire to the mothers. All the eleven families that answered agreed that counseling was very useful to them. There were even families not included in the project who stated that they would have been very pleased to participate in it.

Changes made after counseling were assessed in a third visit using a rating scale evaluating 5 categories of risks: falls, poisoning, choking, burns and drowning. Risk factors had decreased regarding falls, choking and poisoning. Acquisition of knowledge was tested in an OSCE station where students had to identify accident risks in a photograph and propose solutions. 21 of 28 achieved the maximal score and 3 of 28 achieved 75%.

These preliminary results confirm that community directed learning is an effective and accepted method of learning for students and a positive intervention for the community.

According to these results, the study will be continued to evaluate sustainability in order to be incorporated into the curriculum.