

Child injury prevention: a call from the Brazilian Society of Pediatric Nurses

“The child shall enjoy special protection, and shall be given opportunities and facilities, by law and by other means, to enable him to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity.

Declaration of the Rights of the Child, Principle 2

Child injuries are a serious problem in public health worldwide. According to the World Health Organization, more than 950,000 children and adolescents die each year due to accidents that could have been avoided. In addition to deaths, millions of victims require care for non-fatal injuries, which result in permanent damage and measureless social, economic, and emotional repercussions for children, families, and society.⁽¹⁾

An injury is an unintentional and avoidable event which causes physical and emotional injury and occurs at home or in the child social environment, including fall, drowning, suffocation, traffic accident, poisoning burning, electric shock, firearm accident or accident with bladed weapon, among others.^(1,2) Although the term accident has a connotation of unpredictability, which leads us to believe it is uncontrollable or not preventable, such events can be characterized by cause, origin, and epidemiological determinants. Therefore they can be avoided and controlled.⁽¹⁻³⁾

In Brazil, 3,142 children aged up to nine years died in 2012 due to accidents, being most by road traffic accident (33.0%), drowning (23.0%), and suffocation (23.0%).⁽⁴⁾

Among pediatric patients, risk factors for injuries are related to children or adolescents individual characteristics (intrapersonal factors) to families social and cultural conditions (family factors), to the relational environment (interpersonal factors), to the community role as an injury conditioner (institutional factors), and to the impact of the macro environment (cultural factors). Besides the aspects related to age, development stage, and sex, we highlight the inequality and vulnerability conditions related to income, housing, work, support network, educational level and number of children.^(3,5,6)

The most effective measures for injury control in childhood include a set of strategies that consider children in their usual context, and aim at preventing new events, reducing severity of injuries, and diminishing disability arising from them. Such actions include educational activities and environmental and legal changes.^(1,3,5,6)

In the last decades, programs to reduce child mortality focused on infectious diseases and nutritional deficiencies. Several campaigns were performed worldwide to promote breastfeeding and adherence to immunization, as well as to follow children growth and development. Millions of

lives have been saved, and lives of many other children were significantly improved. However, this is the time so that injury prevention also represents governmental priority so that the impact of such investments are not lost.⁽¹⁾

Nurses share with society the responsibility for initiating and supporting actions to meet the population health needs. In the month in which the Children's Day is celebrated in Brazil, the Brazilian Society of Pediatric Nurses (SOBEP, for Sociedade Brasileira de Enfermeiros Pediatras) shares such lemma and calls on professionals to play a leading role in the care of children and families. In this role, professionals should make use of all service opportunities to act in different sectors of society, and to implement interventions that promote adoption of security measures and behavioral changes, aiming at transformation to a safer world.^(5,6)

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Aline Santa Cruz Belela-Anacleto

*Profª Adjunta do Departamento de Enfermagem Pediátrica da Escola Paulista de Enfermagem (EPE), Universidade Federal de São Paulo (UNIFESP);
1ª Tesoureira da Sociedade Brasileira de Enfermeiros Pediatras (SOBEP)
ORCID: 0000-0001-7949-7571*

Myriam Aparecida Mandetta

*Profª Associada do Departamento de Enfermagem Pediátrica da Escola Paulista de Enfermagem (EPE), Universidade Federal de São Paulo (UNIFESP); Presidente da Sociedade Brasileira de Enfermeiros Pediatras (SOBEP)
Orcid: 0000-0003-4399-2479*

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