

## Accidents and injuries: need for a paradigm change

Over at least the last 20 years, the Pan-American Health Organization (PHO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have redirected the conceptual focus on accidents, placing emphasis on the results (injury, trauma, death) under the view that these events do not occur by chance, and that there is a need to identify the factors associated with their occurrence in order to control and prevent them (1). An accident or an accidental event is defined as a complex group of events, with an unintended, sudden, or incidental character, that generate a human behavior that leads to a possible injury (1,2).

At present, the Centers of Disease Control (CDC) in the United States recognize that injuries are accepted as part of our lives. Nevertheless, they are not accidents. The vast majority of accidents can be prevented, and their consequences can be prevented. As such, prevention work should be done (3).

Some authors define injuries as the imbalance that exists between transferred biomechanical energy which leads to harm to an organism (4). For others, it corresponds to harm that an organism undergoes and that is characterized by two conditions: the harm occurs rapidly and appears suddenly, and the causal agent is energy that interacts with the body (5). Injuries are classified as non-intentional and intentional. The former are a result of the occurrence of a variety of mechanisms that include injuries caused by traffic, fire, hot liquids, falls, and accidental poisoning; the later involve violent acts like suicide, personal injuries, or homicides.

In addition, for several years now, the journals *Injury Prevention* and the *British Medical Journal* (6) do not accept the word "accident" in their key words of the articles they publish. I have noted with concern that, in Colombia, this difference is not clear. Therefore, it is important that scholars of public health and academic, journalistic, and communications media make a paradigm change regarding accidents involving injuries. Accidents occur by chance while injuries are preventable events whose risk factors should be identified and prevented.

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