

The Sir Kenneth Standard Distinguished Lecture

The Epidemiology of Violence

Violence is a leading cause of death and morbidity among adolescents and young adults globally. It is also disfiguring, blights cities and costs tax payers, health services and criminal justice systems a fortune. From the perspective of maxillofacial surgery, public health and criminology, this lecture focusses on the measurement of violence in countries and cities using injury data, risk factors for violence and how these risks can be reduced. A principal violence prevention theme stems from the discovery that a great deal of violence which results in emergency treatment is not known to law enforcement agencies – mainly reflecting lack of reporting of violence to police. This finding, replicated in many countries, sets the scene for what has become known as the Cardiff Model for Violence Prevention which has been adopted across the United Kingdom and in cities in the United States, Australia and elsewhere; it is endorsed and promoted by the World Health Organization.

This approach centres not in the criminal justice system alone but in an organized, multi-agency preventive response to violence in which hospital Emergency Departments (EDs) are essential partners. Although over half of violent inci-

dents are not reported to police, injured people seek treatment for their injuries. This means that EDs are sources of unique information which is highly relevant for violence prevention – information about precise violence locations, times and dates, weapons and numbers of assailants. The elements of this approach will be described: data collection, data de-personalization, combination of data from police and EDs, data analysis and data sharing, together with translation of data into practical prevention action by local, multi-agency violence prevention boards. The evidence of effectiveness and cost benefit of this approach and of the individual, evidence-based interventions which it comprises will be presented, together with the mechanisms through which practical prevention can be achieved.

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