

The necessity of a holistic response to minimize the morbidity and mortality attributed to road traffic injuries

Dear Editor:

Road traffic injuries have been associated with significant financial burden on individuals and their families [1]. This is due to the cost incurred for treatment, resulting loss of productivity (those killed or disabled), and for family members who had to apply leave from their job and take care of the injured person [1-2]. The available global estimates suggest that close to 1.3 million people lost their lives on an annual basis [3]. Further, 9 out of 10 deaths are reported in developing nations, which clearly reflects the existing deficits in the environmental attributes, pre-hospital trauma care, health care infrastructure, and trained personnel [3-4].

The epidemiological analysis has suggested that individuals within the age-group of 15-44 years, and predominantly males are more prone to be a victim of road traffic injury [1]. In addition, human errors on the account of over-speeding (augments the risks of both crash as well as aftereffects); non-use of motorcycle helmets, seat-belts, and child restraints increases the risk of death by 40%, 45% (front passengers), and 70% among infants, respectively; driving under the influence of alcohol or some psychoactive substances; and distracted driving (like use of mobile phone raises the risk by 4 times) also have been identified as significant factors [1, 4-5].

Furthermore, factors like insecure road infrastructure, unsafe vehicles, defects in post-crash care, and weak implementation of traffic-related legislative measures, also remarkably enhances the risk of road traffic injuries [2, 5].

Considering the magnitude of the problem and associated long-term risks, target has been set to minimize the number of deaths & injuries attributed to road traffic accidents by 50% till 2020 [1]. Thus, there is an immense need to address the problem, which essentially requires a holistic approach, involving all the concerned sectors (viz. transport, police, health, education, civil works, urban planning, etc.) [3, 5]. Efforts have been taken to increase the political commitment, gather & share best practices in the field of prevention & trauma care, and envisaging for the need to have sustained financial support to strengthen the services [3].

Further, the World Health Organization is working in coordination with an international agency to reduce the number of deaths and injuries in low & middle income nations [1]. In addition, a safety package under the name of Save LIVES has also been launched [1]. The package comprises of 22 measures to target 6 domains, namely speed management, leadership, infrastructure, vehicle safety standards, enforcement of legal provisions pertaining to traffic laws, and post-crash survival [1,4-5]. Further, all the stakeholders should aim for a safe system approach in order to accomplish a safe transport system for all road users [3]. To conclude, road traffic injuries are one of the major global public health problems, and it is high time that urgent and effective steps are taken to reduce the morbidity and mortality attributed to the same.

References

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