

Abstract #: 3884

Injuries in the Northwest Territories, Canada: 2000–09.

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INTRODUCTION: Injury is the third leading cause of death in the Northwest Territories (NWT). Among those aged 1–44 years, it is the leading cause of death. The goal of this study was to describe the epidemiology of injuries among NWT residents from 2000 to 2009.

METHODS: A review of hospitalizations and deaths among NWT residents due to injury for the 2000–09 interval was conducted using data obtained from NWT Vital Statistics and hospital admissions obtained from Canadian Institute for Health Information's Discharge Abstracts Database. The NWT Statistics Bureau Population provided population data. Emergency room visits were not available for analysis. All analyses were performed using SPSS.

RESULTS: Between 2000 and 2009, 308 NWT residents died as a result of an injury, an average of more than 30 deaths per year (crude injury death rate = 72 deaths per 100,000 population year). The top five leading causes of injury-related death were suicide, unintentional poisoning, motor vehicle traffic-related injuries, drowning and falls. Intentional injuries (suicides and violence/injury purposely inflicted) accounted for 32% ($n=100$) of injury deaths whereas unintentional injuries accounted for 67% ($n=205$).

When compared to Canadian figures, age-adjusted rates for injury death were significantly higher among NWT residents for four of the top five causes of injury death. Deaths due to unintentional injuries in the territories were twice the national rate. Deaths due to suicide were 1.6 times, unintentional poisoning was 2.3 times, and violence/purposely inflicted injury was 2.1 times the national rate.

CONCLUSIONS: The results from this study underscore that injuries, unintentional and intentional, are a significant public health issue in the NWT. It is hoped the results of the study will form a base from which evidence can drive injury prevention programming. Adding emergency room surveillance would further contribute to our understanding of the magnitude of injuries.