

African Safety Promotion - Childhood burn injuries in children in Dar es Salaam: patterns and perceptions of prevention: short research article

Author N.A.A. Mbembati, L. Museru and M.T. Leshabari

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Abstract

A study was conducted in the three city hospitals of Dar es Salaam and two national referral hospitals to describe the pattern of burn injuries and to determine victims' and guardians' perceptions of the causes and prevention of burns. The study included all injured children younger than 18 years attending Mwananyamala, Ilala and Temeke city hospitals, Muhimbili National Hospital and Muhimbili Orthopaedic Institute between May and November 1999. Data were obtained by filling in a prepared questionnaire. A total of 253 children attended the hospitals with burn injuries during the period of study. Children younger than five years of age constituted 63.6% of the group. Scalding from hot liquids accounted for 75.8% of the burns, followed by open flame burns (16.2%). Most burns (82.9%) occurred in low socio-economic groups, and 94.4% occurred at home. Over half of the parents (51.5%) thought that burns could not be prevented since 'accidents' are unpreventable and it is difficult to control children; 48.5% of the parents thought that burns could be prevented. There is a need to change parental and guardians' attitudes and beliefs that burn are unpreventable, if burn prevention interventions are to be effective.