

The Experiences and Practices of Public Health Nurses Surrounding Pediatric Injury Prevention Education

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OBJECTIVES: This study sought to describe the practices of public health nurses surrounding injury prevention counseling, explore the influences on the decision to engage clients in injury prevention education and possibly identify perceived barriers to injury prevention counseling.

METHODS: This study employed a descriptive, qualitative design and utilized a semi-structured interview for data collection. The sample consisted of nine public health nurses. The interview protocol centered on the public health nurse perspective of client education- the influences that shape what topics are covered with a family in a home visit, the client education topics of high priority and specific injury-prevention topics of high priority, confidence in providing injury-prevention education, and how pediatric injury prevention fits into public health nurse practice. Interview transcripts were constantly compared throughout the interview process until themes began to emerge. A saturation point was reached when few new themes emerged from the interviews.

RESULTS: Several clear themes emerged, the strongest, most consistent themes included: 1) home visits, and the client education provided during these visits, are predominantly client-driven and situation-specific; 2) nurses provide a significant amount of health promotion education on diverse topics, with sleep safety and car-seat safety reported to be the two injury prevention topics covered most consistently; 3) nurse education directly influences nurse practice in provision of client education, and lastly; 4) there was a general consensus that assessment of and education surrounding handgun safety was not covered by most of the nurses interviewed, despite the requirement for such assessment on required documentation.

CONCLUSIONS: This study reveals the near-unanimous practice of providing client education on sleep safety and car-seat safety and the rare practice of handgun safety education, possibly due to the nurses' perception that handguns were not prevalent in the households they visited. Lastly, this study has highlighted the connection between nurse education and nurse practice. Efforts to increase nurses' knowledge surrounding pediatric injury and proven preventative measures are indicated to enable public health nurses to effectively educate families on how to prevent pediatric injury and protect this vulnerable population.

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This project partially supported by a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, health Resources and Services Administration's Maternal and child Health Bureau (Title V, Social Security Act), grant #T76MC00011-21-00

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