

Racial disparities reduced in injury related mortality

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When it comes to injury-related deaths, the gap between black and white American youths is narrowing, according to a study by researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. The study found that between 1999 and 2005 injury-related deaths among blacks ages 15 to 24 decreased, while injury-related deaths among whites increased. The findings are published in the June, 2008, edition of *Injury Prevention*.

"Between the years of 1999 and 2005 the injury mortality rates among black males have experienced a steady decline," said Susan Baker, MPH, an author of the study and professor in the Bloomberg School's Center for Injury Research and Policy. "During those same years, the injury death rate among white males increased by 7 percent. When compared to rates in 1999, the gap between injury rates of black males and white males decreased by 24 percent."

Using WISQARSTM, a web-based injury statistics query and reporting system, as well as mortality data from several agencies, researchers examined injury mortality rates among Americans between the ages of 15 and 24. Mortality resulting from the ten most common causes of injury-related death was analyzed by race, sex, age, type of injury and state.

The researchers found that the reduction in racial disparity resulted from a decrease in motor vehicle crashes and firearm suicides among black males and an increase in suicide by suffocation (typically hanging) and unintentional poisoning, such as a drug overdose, among white males.

Among young women, black females experienced a decrease in the rate of firearm suicide, while white females experienced an increase in unintentional poisoning and suicidal suffocation.

"The total injury mortality rate among whites did not change significantly; however, there was an 11 percent decrease among blacks," said Guoqing Hu, PhD, lead author and postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Health Policy and Management. "The reduction could be due to a number of preventive efforts, as well as demographic and economic changes. In two of the ten injury categories, increases in mortality rates among whites were alarming. Unintentional poisoning among males and hanging among females both doubled. The underlying reasons for these increases are unknown but deserve further exploration."

Source: Johns Hopkins University

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