

The geography of violence

February 22 2010

At this year's meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Douglas J. Wiebe, PhD, assistant professor of Epidemiology at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine will present portions of an ongoing study about the daily activities of youth and their risk of being violently injured.

Violent injury, the second leading cause of death among US [youth](#), appears to be the end result of a web of factors including alcohol, weapons, and dangerous urban environments. Using new techniques, a team led by Dr. Wiebe is investigating how the nature and whereabouts of daily activities relate to the likelihood of violent injury among youth.

Injured youth are recruited during hospital treatment; uninjured controls are recruited from households across Philadelphia using random digit dialing. Laptop-based, portable mapping technology is used to interview each youth and construct a graphic, minute-by-minute record of how, when, where, and with whom youths spent time or moved about over the 24-hour time period leading up to their injury. Each youth also reports their activities, including use of [alcohol](#) and weapons at each point throughout the same day. Characteristics of streets, buildings, and neighborhood populations are then linked to each point in their daily activities.

"The ultimate goal is to inform communities of place-based [risk factors](#) and identify opportunities to make communities safer," says Wiebe. "Simply put, where youth go throughout their day influences the opportunities they have to get hurt. The goal is to identify the most high

risk places." The hope is that this type of information can be used to better design and revitalize [urban environments](#) for safety.

Provided by University of Pennsylvania

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