

# Collecting injury data could reduce A&E attendances

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A study, published in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* by researchers at Queen Mary University of London (QMUL), has found data on injuries can be collected relatively easily at A&E departments to help understand injury patterns in communities.

Since January 2012 data have been collected at the two main A&E departments of the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford and the Horton General Hospital in Banbury by clerical staff with a good level of success.

The data collection project at the two Oxfordshire hospitals was initiated to inform the current development of the NHS emergency care dataset project now underway across England. The existing emergency care dataset has been in use since the 1970s and is no longer fit for purpose.

The study found that people living in the most deprived parts of Oxfordshire were 70 per cent more likely to attend an emergency department with an unintentional injury than those living in the least deprived parts. This finding of much higher unintentional injury rates in areas with high levels of deprivation held true for unintentional injuries in the home and from falls and non-sport leisure activities. The researchers also found higher sport-related injury rates in areas with lower levels of deprivation, except for football injuries which were higher among the most deprived.

Lead author Graham Kirkwood, from QMUL, said: "This initiative in Oxfordshire shows both the feasibility of collecting enhanced injury data from patients and the usefulness of such data in understanding injury patterns in the community."

Accident and emergency departments across England are struggling to meet the maximum four hour wait specified by government standards. The Royal College of Emergency Medicine describes the situation as an unacceptable "winter all year"

scenario with departments unable to cope with an increasing number of patients requiring urgent care.

Last year there were nineteen and a half million attendances at A&E departments across England, a million more than the year before. Injuries make up a quarter of these.

Unintentional injury, what used to be termed accidents, can lead to injuries from the trivial to the life threatening. Costs to the UK economy have been estimated by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents to be as much as £160 billion a year, or 6.5 per cent of UK gross domestic product. Unintentional injuries are in the main preventable, however to plan, implement and evaluate prevention initiatives requires good quality data.

Co-author Professor Allyson Pollock, from QMUL, added: "The government needs to ensure the success of the new NHS emergency care data set and its enhanced [injury](#) component."

Provided by Queen Mary, University of London

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