Concept for Second Global Meeting of Ministry of Health Focal Points for Injury and Violence Prevention

Injuries, whether unintentional - resulting from incidents such as road traffic collisions, drowning, falls and burns - or intentional - following an assault or self-inflicted violence or acts of war - kill more than five million people worldwide each year and harm many millions more. In some parts of the world, the public health community has recognized for several years that injuries are a major public health problem. In other countries, the enormous health, social and economic costs of injuries are just now beginning to be understood and efforts are being made to prevent injuries and address their consequences.

In recent years the World Health Organization (WHO) has significantly stepped up its activities in the area of injury and violence prevention. The Organization's World report on road traffic injury prevention and World report on violence and health and the resolutions related to these reports passed by the World Health Assembly specifically call upon governments to identify focal points for injuries and violence prevention within Ministries of Health to coordinate and facilitate national efforts. As a follow-up to these World Health Assembly resolutions, and in some cases based on formal requests from WHO's Regional Directors, more than 100 governments have already taken the step to appoint Ministry of Health focal points for injury and violence prevention.

A First Global Meeting of Ministry of Health Focal Points for Injury and Violence Prevention was held 31 March-1 April 2006 in Durban, South Africa. The meeting sought to increase collaboration between Ministry of Health focal points and WHO and to support Ministries of Health in their efforts to strengthen national injury and violence prevention programmes. The meeting was attended by 84 focal persons from 67 primarily low-income and middle-income countries, 2 representatives of WHO Collaborating Centers and WHO staff. The format involved plenary sessions on preventing injuries and violence, sharing the results of the National Injury Response Survey, and developing a network of Ministry of Health focal points; working groups on developing national policies for injury and violence prevention; building capacities for injury and violence prevention; collecting data on injuries and violence; providing services for victims of injuries and violence; and measuring progress towards policy formulation and programme development; and regional meetings. The main outcomes included: networking opportunities, a decision to strengthen collaboration between the Ministry of Health focal points and WHO, creation of a global network of Ministry of Health focal points and WHO staff, plans to develop a document on the role of Ministries of Health in preventing injuries and violence as well as a series of indicators, regional meetings of Ministry of Health focal points and a global meeting in 2008. This first meeting of its kind was an important milestone for the injury and violence prevention field as well as WHO's efforts in this area of work. A number of regional meetings of Ministry of Health focal points have also taken place in the past two years.
WHO will convene the Second Global Meeting of Ministry of Health Focal Points for Injury and Violence Prevention on 13-14 March 2008. The meeting will take place in the margins of the 9th World Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion (a bi-annual conference which serves as the main international gathering of injury and violence prevention researchers, practitioners and advocates) which will take place in Merida, Mexico from 15-18 March 2008. Those Ministry of Health officials to be invited to participate would be those formally identified as the Ministry of Health's focal point(s) for injury and violence prevention. It is estimated that over 100 participants will attend.

The goal of the two-day pre-meeting will be to support Ministry of Health focal points for injury and violence prevention. The objectives will be to:

1. increase the exchange of ideas and information between the focal points and their peers
2. further clarify the role of Ministry of Health focal points
3. identify future activities of the informal network of Ministry of Health focal points
4. inform the focal points about WHO products and tools for injury and violence prevention
5. facilitate the participation of the focal points in the 9th World Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion

The draft agenda is currently being prepared based on a questionnaire to Ministry of Health focal points, but may involve the following:

1. group work and discussion on the role of Ministry of Health focal points, based on the new WHO document entitled Preventing injuries and violence: a guide for ministries of health
2. group work and discussion on capacity development; surveillance; and services
3. presentation of and discussion on the new road safety project (the "Bloomberg project")
4. plenary presentation and discussion on policy development
5. group meetings of Ministry of Health focal points by region (half day)
6. brief presentations on future global and regional injury and violence prevention activities

Working languages of the pre-meeting:
English and Spanish