

ILS Drowning Data and Research Survey

Dr Richard C Franklin PhD¹ and Justin Scarr^{1,2}

Royal Life Saving Society – Australia¹, Drowning Prevention Commission, International Life Saving Federation²

In 2007, the International Life Saving Federation released its first World Drowning Report with the intent of having a report on a regular basis. The inaugural report provided a picture of the size of the drowning problem, who was drowning including supplementary information from 16 ILS members, limitations in our current understanding of the problem, key issues and interventions.

It has now been four years since the report was delivered and with the World Conference on Drowning Prevention to be held in May 2011 this is an excellent time to revisit the data on drowning and explore any changes which have occurred over the past four years. As such in January 2011 the ILS Drowning Prevention Commission undertook to collect information from ILS members about their organisations' capacity to generate, interpret and utilise drowning prevention related research.

Aims

To explore the size of the drowning burden using ILS countries.

To gain an understanding of ILS member data requirements and uses of data.

To gain an understanding of those issues considered more important for drowning prevention.

Methods

A survey to collect information on drowning and its prevention was developed in December 2010 using the on-line survey tool SurveyMonkey™. The survey was then reviewed and piloted. In January 2011 one person from each ILS member or affiliate organisation was sent an e-mail asking them to participate in the ILS Drowning Data and Research Survey. Unfortunately not all members have an e-mail nor did all e-mails work. Where an e-mail bounced and we had a second e-mail address, either for another person in the organisation or a second e-mail for the person, they were sent another e-mail. In a small number of cases the organisations who we sent an e-mail too asked us to send another e-mail to a different person. In total there were 107 e-mail addresses invited to participate – of these 55 responded.

Results

At the time of writing this abstract the survey had only recently been completed and the following is a snapshot of the initial results. Please note results may change once the data has been cleaned and analysed. There were 55 people who responded to the survey; 18 partially completed the survey (i.e. answered some of the questions but did not complete) and 37 completed the survey. This represented results from 45 countries. Of these 45 countries, 24 provided some information on the number of people who drowned in their country. Of these eight were from the ILS Region America, five were from the Asia-Pacific region, 11 were from the Europe region.

These results cover 1.2 billion of the world population and approximately 25,400 deaths per annum or a crude rate of 2.2 per 100,000 people per annum. It is interesting to note that the crude rates varied significantly by region with Asia-Pacific having the lowest rate at 1.8 per 100,000 people and Europe having the highest crude rate at 3.8 per 100,000 people, with Americas at 2.1 per 100,000. While the regions do not exactly map they were all lower than the estimates from the World Health Organisation.

There were 37 responses from 30 countries to the questions on 'how important for drowning prevention are the following issues'. The following summarises the number of responses who said they were extremely important: alcohol (32%), home swimming pools (8%), training (32%), public education (51%), legislation/regulations/standards (32%), drugs (8%), floods (11%), Tsunami (3%), lifejackets (35%), lifeguards/lifesaver training (51%), lifesaver/lifeguard recruitment (32%), cold water (11%), parent supervision (43%), CPR (24%), signage (including flags) (24%), drowning as a method of self harm (8%).

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Corresponding Author

Dr Richard Franklin PhD
National Manager Research and Health Promotion
Royal Life Saving Society – Australia
PO Box 558, Broadway NSW Australia 2007
Email: rfranklin@rlssa.org.au
Website: www.royallifesaving.com.au
Telephone: +61 2 8217 3111