Development and implementation of community-based drowning prevention interventions in a selected urban coastal community in the Northern Philippines

Prof Jonathan Guevarra¹, Dr Juanita Basilio², Lita Orbillo² and Dr John Juliard Go³

Department of Health Promotion and Education, College of Public Health, University of the Philippines¹, Department of Health, Republic of the Philippines², Office of the Representative in the Philippines, World Health Organization³

Introduction
According to the World Report on Child Injury Prevention (2008), 175,000 children and youth less than 20 years old around the world died of drowning in 2004. Ninety eight percent (98%) of deaths due to drowning occurred in low-income and middle-income countries (1). In South East Asia, the death rate was 6.6/100,000. Drowning is also a leading cause of child injury deaths in the Philippines. In 2003, death rate among children 1 to 4 years was 17/100,000, while that among 10 to 14 years was 10/100,000 (2). In its desire to address the problem, the Department of Health (DOH) conducted an assessment and implemented community-based interventions in a pilot site in the Northern Philippines.

Objectives
This describes the knowledge, attitude and practices of community residents in an urban coastal community on drowning prevention. In addition, the drowning-prone areas in the area were identified and community-based interventions were planned and implemented in the pilot site.

Methods and Materials
Quantitative (community-based survey) and qualitative (key informant interview, focus group discussion, observation) data collection methods were used. Results were presented to the community through a community assembly. Community leaders and residents actively participated during the planning phase and were highly involved in the implementation of local drowning prevention initiatives.

Results/Discussion
Awareness of drowning prevention programs and activities in the community is also quite low. The respondents have positive attitude towards supervising children while swimming or playing in high risk areas, in buying and wearing flotation devices, in conducting CPR training for resort owners, and participating in drowning prevention measures. Practices on child supervision, wearing of flotation devices and participation in water safety awareness activities should be improved given the children’s easy access to open water. Several areas in the community were also identified as drowning-prone areas. Community drowning interventions were planned and implemented. Health promotion materials and drowning prevention messages were developed and used in community health campaigns. Training programs on First Aid, Basic Life Support, and Basic Survival Swimming were also done. Trained community residents developed their own indigenous rescue devices which they can use in saving the lives of drowning/near-drowning victims in their respective areas. Orientation on the use of Online National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (ONEISS) was also conducted. For the identified drowning-prone areas in the barangay, barriers/fences and covering of manholes were constructed.

Conclusions/Recommendations
Authorities must support the local initiatives on drowning prevention. In the same way, the community leaders and trained community members must join hands in looking for ways and means to sustain the efforts that they have started.

References

Corresponding Author
Professor Jonathan Guevarra
Assistant Professor and Chair
Department of Health Promotion and Education, College of Public Health, University of the Philippines
625 Pedro Gil Street, Ermita, Manila, Philippines
5 Calubcob, Silang, Cavite, Philippines
Manila Philippines 1000
Email: jonguevarra9n@yahoo.com
Telephone: +63 2 5260811