Fatal drownings in Nepal: As reported in the media

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Background
Drowning is one of the leading causes of death in low- and middle-income countries. Children are particularly considered to be vulnerable to drowning death. This study is an attempt to assess the magnitude of fatal drowning using news reports published in different media of Nepal.

Objective
To provide an initial estimate of fatal drowning in Nepal using secondary sources of information.

Method
News reports on drowning were searched in Google and other national newspapers’ websites using the term ‘drowning’, ‘drowned to death’ in both Devanagari and Roman scripts. The search was conducted for the period April 2010 to April 2011. On-screen selection was done for the relevant report links. Data were extracted for date, place of occurrence, age, sex and activities around the drowning incident and were analysed using Microsoft Excel 2007.

Results
- There were three times more hits obtained from the key word search in Devanagari script compared to the key words in Roman script. Most reports were from the websites based at local levels
- 194 drowning death cases were reported in different news sources for the year 2067BS (April 2010– April 2011)
- Reported drowning deaths were highest during the rainy seasons (i.e. from July–September)
- More than half of the total drowning deaths were children
- Major activities during an incidence of drowning were reported as having a bathe or swimming or crossing the river

Conclusion
A community-based study would provide more details on circumstances leading to drowning. The lack of ability to swim could be a major reason behind the death of children. Therefore swimming training should be initiated in the formal education system of Nepal.

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