

HOUSEHOLD ELECTRICAL INJURIES IN CHILDREN IN GREECE. EPIDEMIOLOGY AND IDENTIFICATION OF AVOIDABLE HAZARDS

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Objective: To estimate the magnitude and spectrum of childhood electrocutions occurring in Greece in order to develop control and preventive strategies.

Material and Methods: During a five-year period (1996-2000), 55 children (0-14years old) with electrical injuries were recorded by the Emergency Department Injury Surveillance System (EDISS) established in the Accident and Emergency Departments of three major hospitals across Greece. Specially trained health visitors interviewed in person the child's guardian on the basis of a pre-coded questionnaire. Statistical analysis was undertaken through simple cross-tabulations of data. **Results:** The annual incidence of childhood electrical injuries was about 10 per 100000. Boys are at higher risk as well as children 0-4 years old, whereas migrants represent a relatively high proportion (13%) of the recorded injured children. Electrical injuries occurred predominantly in the bedroom and the kitchen (28% and 20% respectively). The objects most frequently involved in the injury were electrical cords (47%), wall sockets (40%) and household electrical devices (9%). 40% of the injuries occurred during the weekend and more specifically in evening hours. 1 out of 4 children with electrical injury sustained burns located in the upper limbs. It is worth noting that supervision of children was sub-optimal (less than 50%). Electrocutions were of significant severity as reflected by the high hospitalization rate (70%). **Conclusions:** These data indicate that household electrocutions represent a small but not negligible fraction of all indoor injuries. Strategies for eliminating childhood electrocutions should concentrate on ensuring safe domestic environments with properly maintained electrical devices.

