

NON-FATAL INJURY SURVEILLANCE FOR SOUTH AFRICA

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Of the estimated five million non-fatal injuries that occur every year in South Africa, between 50 and 60% present to health facilities. Because it is not feasible to monitor all of the 2.5 million injuries seen in the health sector, a sampling-based surveillance system is required. This is known as sentinel surveillance, and the success of such systems depends on the degree to which the facilities used as sentinel sites are representative of the injury profile across all demographic and social sectors.

Funded by the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, a consortium of science councils and universities began to develop such a system in January 1999. The key design tools include a Global Information System database locating health facilities, regions and districts throughout South Africa, and a review of existing data collection systems at major hospitals. This will provide the basis for identifying the sentinel areas and facilities, and designing a system to manage the information. The design process will be completed by the end of April 1999 and this paper will describe the system.

The health sector constitutes an essential resource for the provision of accurate and useful information about the external causes, victim characteristics, and situational factors of injury incidents. This is critical for the development of appropriate injury prevention and control strategies, and the evaluation and monitoring of direct and indirect interventions.