

Title of Intervention: Community-wide infant walker injury prevention initiative

Intervention Strategies: Campaigns and Promotions, Group Education, Environments and Policies

Purpose of the Intervention: To increase awareness of the hazards of infant walkers and to reduce the number of infant walker-related injuries

Population: Infants and parents

Setting: Rochester, New York; health care facility-based, community-based

Partners: health care providers; malls; libraries, retailers; post offices; media; Salvation Army; Department of Health

Intervention Description:

- Campaigns and Promotions: Posters, brochures and pamphlets were designed and produced for parents, day care providers and other caregivers. Materials were designed for a sixth grade reading level. The materials and posters, which included vivid drawings of a child rolling downstairs in a walker out of reach of his mother, emphasized that even under the best conditions, walker use is unsafe and stressed the use of infant walker alternatives. Packets containing these materials were sent to over 240 health care providers' office and clinics, including pediatricians, family medicine and emergency medicine physicians, and obstetricians. A cover letter briefly outlined the project and requested providers' participation, both in distributing the educational materials to their patients and in counseling them against the use of infant walkers. Materials were distributed at local shopping malls, libraries and post offices. Local retail merchants also agreed to support a one-day "walker roundup." Families were asked to turn in their infant walkers for destruction in return for a chance at one of three donated coupons for \$100 of merchandise. A press conference promoting the event and the anti-walker message was held in a university hospital. Coalition members and a mother and her child who had been injured in an infant walker were featured. Several local radio and television stations, newspapers and a parent magazine reported on the press conference. On the day of the roundup, extensive local media coverage was again present, resulting in extensive local and limited national coverage. The Monroe County Department of Health sent educational materials to parents with newborn children's birth certificates.
- Group Education: To supplement efforts, members of the coalition gave educational presentations to several childcare agencies, volunteer agencies and medical societies.
- Environments and Policies: In order to decrease the number of walkers in use, local retailers were asked to voluntarily discontinue the sale of infant walkers. Following informational meetings with the managers of the three largest local retailers of baby products, they agreed. The local Salvation Army agreed to discontinue the re-distribution of walkers through their stores.

Theory: Not mentioned

Resources Required:

- Staff/Volunteers: Educators, event organizers
- Training: Not mentioned
- Technology: Media production capability
- Space: Space for events, meetings and educational sessions
- Budget: Not mentioned
- Intervention: Posters, brochures, pamphlets, media releases, provider packets with cover letter
- Evaluation: Access to medical records

Evaluation:

- Design: Pre- and post-evaluation
- Methods and Measures: The mean annual numbers of children evaluated for walker-related falls was assessed using medical records.

Outcomes:

- Short Term Impact: The number of walkers destroyed at the "walker roundup" was small (n=32). However, the educational intervention likely led to destruction of walkers by parents separate from the walker roundup; those who did not attend the "walker roundup" still destroyed their child's walkers on learning the danger of injury.
- Long Term Impact: There was a 28% average annual reduction in infant falls due to walkers.

Maintenance: Not mentioned

Lessons Learned: Despite the well-known risk of injury from the use of infant walkers, walker use remains popular and associated injuries are common. Although longer-term or even more intensive community interventions might be more effective, it seems likely that governmental policy changes are needed to profoundly reduce numbers of walker injuries.

Citation(s):

Conners GP, Veenema TG, Kavanagh CA, Ricci J, Callahan CM. Still falling: a community-wide infant walker injury prevention initiative. *Patient Educ Couns.* Mar 2002;46(3):169-173.