



# road research

*The Newsletter of the Road Traffic Injuries  
Research Network*

ROAD TRAFFIC INJURIES RESEARCH

**Voices from South Asia!**

Dear Colleagues,

Greetings! It is a great pleasure to introduce the newsletter of RTIRN focusing on South Asia. The idea for thematic issues was a great introduction by our secretariat and fully supported by the Board. The previous issues on Africa was very well received, and we hope to cover other regions of the world over 2008-09; so please send in your contributions from any part of the world!

This newsletter reports on many events over the past few months. We had a working meeting for the RTIRN flagship project on a multi-country analysis of non-standard helmet use in Kuala Lumpur for 2 days in May 2008. RTIRN then had a very successful capacity development workshop. Thanks to our colleagues at the Malaysian Institute for Road Safety, Department of Road Safety, and Universiti Putra Malaysia we had over 100 professionals attending the sessions. The Board of RTIRN also met the following day and developed concrete plans for the network for 2008-09.

The coming months bring many exciting events within RTIRN and also externally. I hope that all of you have seen our call for junior researchers and upcoming professionals to apply for research funding. Thanks to the Global Road Safety Facility of the World Bank, we are fortunate in having the resources to strengthen capacity development in RTI research in the developing world. In August our secretariat hosts their own national health research symposium on "Injuries in the Developing World" at Aga Khan University, Karachi, Pakistan. I hope that many of you can attend this important conference and share your experiences.

I hope that all of us will not only continue our own work, but reach out and assist other colleagues, researchers, and students. RTIRN is delighted that we have managed to secure funds to support specific initiatives; but key to their success is your participation, engagement and energy. Please make most use of this newsletter, our listserv and the opportunities for better and relevant RTI research in your country.

Best wishes!

**Adnan A. Hyder, MD MPH PhD**

*Vice Chair, RTIRN*

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## Recent Events

### Workshop for Multi-Country Study on Helmet use in LMICs

Held on 7 and 8 May 2008 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the second workshop for the Multi Country Study (MCS) was attended by principle investigators from collaborating centers in Asia, Africa and Latin America, who are part of this study on non-standard motorcycle helmet use. The MCS is one of RTIRN's projects being undertaken with support from the World Bank Global Road Safety Facility, and the Global Forum for Health Research. With active participation from RTIRN board members and the participating centers, this was a highly interactive event, addressing in detail several issues related to the project. The workshop marked a new start for the project, with renewed enthusiasm and commitment from the participating centers.



[http://rtirn.net/Malaysia\\_may\\_2008\\_work\\_Shp.asp](http://rtirn.net/Malaysia_may_2008_work_Shp.asp)

Clockwise: Thuy Anh Trinh, Nitaya Vajanapoom, Robyn Norton, Kulanthayan Mani, Gururaj Gopalakrishna, Abdul Ghaffar, Junaid Razzak, Martha Hijar

### RTIRN Symposium: Evaluating Road Safety Interventions for Health Outcomes

The symposium was organized on May 8th with the objective of equipping local and national researchers with road safety knowledge and sound research skills. This event, co-hosted by the RTIRN and Malaysian Institute for Road Safety, with support from the World Bank Global Road Safety Facility was attended by over 100 participants.



With presentations from RTIRN board members, the session addressed principles of evaluation of road safety interventions. Experiences from different countries were also presented at the symposium, with RTIRN secretary Junaid Razzak talking about pre-hospital care interventions in low and middle income countries, and Francis Afukaar and Martha Hijar presenting perspectives from Ghana and Mexico, respectively. The Director General of the Road Safety Department in Malaysia, Datuk Suret

Singh, presented the keynote. Audience involvement in interactive question/answer sessions supplied some interesting discussions, and the symposium also provided an opportunity for networking among researchers working in different areas of road safety in Malaysia.

For further information and resource material from the symposium, please visit [http://rtirn.net/Malaysia\\_may\\_2008\\_review2.asp](http://rtirn.net/Malaysia_may_2008_review2.asp)

## Message from Board Member from South Asia – Gururaj Gopalkrishna

*Road traffic deaths and Injuries in South East Asia Call for information and action*



As globalization, motorization, urbanization and industrialization become hall marks of growth and development in South Asia, road traffic deaths, injuries and disabilities have emerged as major public health problems. While high income countries registered a significant decline in road crashes, deaths and injuries in last 3-4 decades, low and middle income countries (especially South Asia) have seen an increase in road deaths. Each year, an estimated 300,000 persons die in road crashes, with nearly 15-20 times this number being hospitalized. Nearly one fourth to one fifth end up with life long disabilities. It has been estimated that road deaths contribute to an estimated loss of 1-3% of GDP, varying from country to country. Road crashes and deaths primarily affect young people (15-44 yrs), predominantly men, from the middle and lower income sections of the society. Vulnerable road users like pedestrians, two wheeler riders / pillions and bicyclists constitute majority among those killed and injured. The associated economic hardships impact hugely on these transition societies and contribute for an increase in poverty.

The region is also characterized by the absence of surveillance/information systems and well designed, research-driven road safety policies and programmes. Lack of road safety research institutions and professionals along with limited resources (technical & financial) forms a notable barrier.

There is a strong need to strengthen and support road safety research in South Asian countries to effectively develop policies and programmes that are intersectoral in nature, well coordinated, fully implemented, monitored and evaluated. This calls for bringing together professionals from health and related disciplines and developing a new breed of safety professionals / researchers in the region. Research should move into larger domains (beyond incidence numbers) with a focus on identifying modifiable risk factors, prioritizing interventions and monitoring and evaluation. RTIRN is a step in this direction with a commitment for promoting, strengthening, and facilitating research to reduce road traffic deaths and injuries in low and middle income countries.

## Road Safety Situation: Reflections from Sri Lanka

*Dr. Jayalath Edirisinghe, University of Peradeniya - Sri Lanka*



The road traffic accident scenario in Sri Lanka does not vary too much from other countries with similar economic status. Driver and pedestrian behavior, lack of law enforcement, lack of facilities on roads, poor condition of vehicles, and illegal activities on roads etc contribute to the frequent traffic accidents that occur on the country's roads. The major accident victim category in Sri Lanka is Pedestrians, as high as 35 % - 40% among casualties. Buses make up the major vehicle category in traffic accidents, about 15 % according to the statistics available at Police Head Quarters in Colombo. The main reasons for traffic accidents are high speeds and illegal overtaking.

The Faculty of Engineering, University of Peradeniya has launched a number of studies in and around Kandy. Some of these projects currently in progress are studying the effect of pedestrian facilities and behavior on accidents, safety of motor bicycle riders, impact of three wheelers on road safety, traffic accidents on railway level crossings and safety of school children. Two photo exhibitions, organized under the patronage of National Transport Commission of Sri Lanka were also part of our endeavors.

For further information, please write to Dr Edirisinghe at [jayalath.edirisinghe@gmail.com](mailto:jayalath.edirisinghe@gmail.com) or visit [http://www.geocities.com/jayalath\\_edirisinghe](http://www.geocities.com/jayalath_edirisinghe)

## Partner Profile

### Rakhi Dandona

*George Institute for International Health – India*



Associate Professor Rakhi Dandona is the Head of Population Health Research Division at the George Institute for International Health – India based in Hyderabad, Associate Professor at the University of Sydney and Senior Research Fellow at the George Institute for International Health, Sydney. She holds a PhD from the University of Melbourne.



Rakhi's recent research has focused on epidemiological studies investigating the magnitude, risk factors and consequences of road traffic injuries in India, particularly among vulnerable population groups. Some of her recent work was supported by a grant from the Wellcome Trust, UK. She has also undertaken road safety policy and road safety intervention research, and has published widely in peer-reviewed literature. She is currently leading a population-based assessment of injuries in rural India, risk factors assessment for road traffic injuries among heavy vehicle drivers in India, and is developing injury and trauma research programs with a focus on the South Asian region.

Rakhi is particularly interested in supporting research and training activities that promote a sustainable research environment in the developing countries to deal effectively with injuries. She is involved with supervision of graduate and post-graduate students engaged in injury research in a developing country setting, and also serves as a mentor in the MENTOR-VIP programme of the World Health Organization.

### Road Safety: Efforts by the Mumbai Traffic Police

*Dr Anuradha Bose, Christian Medical College, Vellore – India*



Tackling the problem of road traffic injuries in India is not easy, for various reasons, such as the heterogeneous traffic mix and huge population. However, in the last few years, everywhere one goes in the cities there are visible efforts instituted by the Traffic Police to create awareness on road safety. One example of this is the efforts of the Mumbai Traffic Police, who were presented with the Overdrive Safety Award of the Year on the 11th of January, 2008 in New Delhi. With efforts for improving public awareness and implementing penalties for violators, Mumbai traffic police was commended on making the roads of Mumbai city much safer- especially with regard to strict enforcement of drinking-and- driving laws, discouraging use of mobile phones and adoption of seat-belts and helmets. Such initiatives provide inspiration to other stakeholders in road traffic safety, who can play active roles in their various capacities to make a difference in improving safety on the roads of developing countries.



For further information, please write to Dr Bose at [abose@cmcvellore.ac.in](mailto:abose@cmcvellore.ac.in)

# road research

## **RTIRN Projects – Supported by the World Bank Global Road Safety Facility**

Grants for Junior Researchers – the RTIRN is currently accepting applications for scholarship funds available for junior researchers from low- and middle-income countries conducting appropriate road safety projects in their country of origin. Application deadline 31 July, 2008. For further information and to download application forms, please visit [www.rtirn.net](http://www.rtirn.net)

Fellowship grants – the network will soon be announcing these grants that will be made available to senior road safety researchers from LMICs to spend at least 3 months at another centre of excellence to exchange ideas and learn from other experts in the field. Look out for the call for applications on the RTIRN website and mailing list.

### **New RTIRN Partners!**

**We welcome the new partners who have recently joined RTIRN:**

**Mary Esther Larkin – Australia**  
**S. M Shariful Islam – Bangladesh**  
**Innocent Ndifor Mancho – Cameroon**  
**Jacquineau Azetsop – Canada**  
**Edmund Kwasi Debrah – Ghana**  
**James Damsere-Derry – Ghana**  
**Rupam Sinha – India**  
**Anita Abd. Rahman – Malaysia**  
**NurFazzillah Mohamed Noordin – Malaysia**  
**Nora Ahmad – Malaysia**  
**Barun Kumar Singh – Nepal**  
**Molete Annah Motshabi – South Africa**  
**Pascal Gemperli – Switzerland**  
**Yahya Mwenjuma Kishashu – Tanzania**  
**Aropet Godfrey – Uganda**  
**Babalola Faseru – USA**  
**Tu Anh Trinh - Vietnam**  
**Sahipul Hijaiman Sulaiman - Malaysia**  
**Mohammed Umer Mir - Pakistan**  
**Jamilah Mohd Marjan - Malaysia**  
**Rohayu Sarani - Malaysia**  
**Hizal Hanis Hashim - Malaysia**  
**Pramod Kumar Verma - India**  
**Puspa Pant – United Kingdom**  
**Williams Ackaah - Ghana**



## ICMR Initiatives for research in Motor Vehicle Injuries

*Dr Geetha Menon, Indian Council for Medical Research, New Delhi - India*

Despite a number of agencies in India that collect data on RTI morbidity and mortality, there is no central linking agency that provides a comprehensive data base. Hence the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) initiated research on RTIs.



Following a WHO supported workshop in 2006, ICMR developed a model for prospective injury surveillance and tested its feasibility in Bangalore and Pune. Thirty three private and government hospitals, the police and the transport department participated in the study. We collected data on 32,546 cases of road traffic injuries (from Nov 06- Oct 07) which constitute 44% of total injuries. Majority of injuries were among males in 15-44 years age group and two-wheeler riders accounted for 30.1% of RTI victims. One fourth of the victims were pedestrians, 17% pedal cyclists and 10.5% were two wheeler pillion riders. Majority of the victims presented with limb (U/L) injuries, head and face injuries. Victims were transported to the hospitals mainly by private vehicles and taxis. The detailed report is available at the website [http://icmr.nic.in/final/final\\_report\\_traffic.pdf](http://icmr.nic.in/final/final_report_traffic.pdf). RTIs have also figured as an important area for collaborative research between India and United States under the INDO-US Joint program on Environment and Health for which ICMR is the nodal agency from the Indian side.

For further information, please contact Dr Geetha Menon at [menong@icmr.org.in](mailto:menong@icmr.org.in)



## Road Traffic Safety Updates from Karachi

*Syed Ameer Hussain, RTI Research and Prevention Center – Karachi, Pakistan*

An increase in the number of credit facilities on offer for purchase of vehicles in Pakistan in 2002 has led to an exponential increase in vehicles on the road in the urban centers. Unfortunately, this has been accompanied with a proportionate increase in road crashes. As a response, the Road Traffic Injury Research & Prevention Center was established at Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Center, Karachi in collaboration with N.E.D University and Aga Khan University Hospital, recognized by Federal Ministry of Health. Professor Dr. Rashid Jooma is the Principal investigator of this project which is sponsored by Indus Motors Company Ltd.

The project aims to quantify and assess severity of road traffic accidents, identify vulnerable road user groups, major causes of accidents and conduct detailed analyses of hazardous locations. 35607 injuries and 892 fatalities were recorded in 2007 and showed riders and pedestrians to be the most vulnerable to road accidents.

In the light of this dire traffic safety situation, the city government & Traffic Police have taken steps to improve road safety which include helmet enforcement, pedestrian bridges and bus stops, and establishment of trauma ambulances service. It is hoped that these interventions will serve to improve safety conditions on roads that are becoming increasingly dangerous by the day.

For further information, please write to Ameer Hussain on [rtiproject@gmail.com](mailto:rtiproject@gmail.com)



## Research focus: Establishment of Safety Concept among Drivers

**and Users of Indian School Buses** *Dr. Somnath Gangopadhyay, University of Calcutta - India*

School buses play a significant role in transportation of students to and from the school in Kolkata. These are considered to be the safest mode of transport in city areas, in spite of poor ergonomic interior design. Recently, we conducted a participatory ergonomics study to develop a virtual concept of a safe, ergonomically designed school bus. The questionnaire-based study addressed three population groups: students, parents and bus drivers of four different schools of Kolkata. Analysis revealed that students and bus drivers are not aware about school bus safety. We have suggested the formulation of an in depth training program for school bus drivers, and some changes in the design of school buses on the basis of feedback given by regular users, hoping to contribute towards the establishment of safe school bus system in Kolkata.



For further information, please write to Dr Gangopadhyay at [ganguly1961@yahoo.com](mailto:ganguly1961@yahoo.com)



## Road Traffic Injury Research at the Aga Khan University

*Uzma Khan, Karachi, Pakistan*

Amidst a scenario of substantial injury burden faced by Pakistan, and the complexity of measuring injury-related outcomes, some promising efforts for research have been initiated by the Aga Khan University Injury Research group. The University, in addition to hosting the Secretariat of the Road Traffic Injuries Research Network, has an active Injury Research and Emergency Care Programme. The Injury group has been leading a number of projects, and collaborating on others, with funding from both internal sources and from national and international donors. The current portfolio of research activities within the injury group includes road traffic injuries surveillance, childhood unintentional injury surveillance, assessment of trauma care in the province, trauma triage of road traffic crash victims to trauma centers, situation analysis of commercial licensing process, time delay and outcome of road trauma victims, geographical analysis of road traffic injury distribution and research focused on commercial drivers' attitudes, practices and physical fitness for driving these vehicles. The University also holds the Fogarty training grant in Injury research training in collaboration with Johns Hopkins University and has so far trained 3 research fellows in injury research. In August this year, the Aga Khan University is organizing a National Symposium on Injuries with a focus on injury prevention and treatment in developing countries.

### Recent RTI Publications from Low and Middle Income Countries

Gangopadhyay S, Dev S, Das T, Ghoshal G, Ara T

**A study on concept of safety among users of school buses of Kolkata.** Journal of Environmental Physiology, 2008; 1(1): 11-19

Nakahara S, Jayatilleke A U, Ichikawa M, Marasinghe A, Kimura A, Yoshida K

**Feasibility of standardized injury surveillance and reporting: a comparison of data from four Asian nations** Injury Prevention, 2008; 14:106-112

**Cambodia Road Traffic Accident and Victim Information System (RTAVIS) annual report 2007** [www.roadsafetycambodia.info](http://www.roadsafetycambodia.info) ; for hard copies, contact [rtavis@hib-cambodia.org](mailto:rtavis@hib-cambodia.org)

Support for the RTIRN made Possible by:  
The Global Forum for Health Research  
The World Health Organization  
The World Bank

## Call for Board members

*The RTIRN is currently receiving nominations for three positions on the network Board.*

***Nomination deadline: 31 July, 2008***

*For further details and nomination guidelines, please visit the website,*

***[www.rtirn.net](http://www.rtirn.net)***

# Save the dates!!

**26-28 August 2008**

**Karachi, Pakistan**

The Aga Khan University 12th Health Sciences Research Symposium  
"Injury in the Developing World - from Prevention to Care"  
<http://www.aku.edu/news/seminars/injury/>

RTIRN Workshop at the Aga Khan University  
12th Health Sciences Research Symposium  
(Supported by the World Bank Global Road Safety Facility grant)  
26 August 2008  
"Measuring the Burden of Injuries – A cost effective approach"

**2-6 November 2008**

**Hanoi, Vietnam**

Second Asia Pacific Conference on Injury Prevention  
<http://www.apacph2008.org/>

To become a partner of the network, please visit our website at [www.rtirn.net](http://www.rtirn.net)

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