Nighttime assaults: using a national emergency department monitoring system to predict occurrence, target prevention and plan services

Author(s)
Bellis MA, Leckenby N, Hughes K et al.

Abstract

Background
Emergency department (ED) data have the potential to provide critical intelligence on when violence is most likely to occur and the characteristics of those who suffer the greatest health impacts. We use a national experimental ED monitoring system to examine how it could target violence prevention interventions towards at risk communities and optimise acute responses to calendar, holiday and other celebration-related changes in nighttime assaults.

Methods
A cross-sectional examination of nighttime assault presentations (6 pm to 6 am; n=330,172) over a three-year period (31st March 2008 to 30th March 2011) to English EDs analysing changes by weekday, month, holidays, major sporting events, and demographics of those presenting.

Conclusions
To date, the role of ED data has focused on helping target nightlife police activity. Its utility is much greater; capable of targeting and evaluating multi-agency life course approaches to violence prevention and optimising frontline resources. National ED data are critical for fully engaging health services in the prevention of violence.
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