

CONFERENCE REPORTS

Injury Control and Traffic Safety Course

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The promotion of road safety in Africa remains an imperative considering the disproportionately large public health and developmental burden from road traffic crashes across the continent. Extensive and well-intentioned collaborative traffic campaigns held predominantly over the holiday periods have reflected commendable success; however, injury statistics in South Africa and elsewhere have remained unacceptably high. It has been argued that both professionals and civil society become more aware of the importance and the basic principles of injury control and traffic safety. The Violence, Injury and Peace Research Unit (VIPRU, co-directed by the South African Medical Research Council and University of South Africa), Institute for Social and Health Sciences, University of South Africa, the International Council of Road Safety International (ICORSI), and the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi (IITDelhi) co-hosted a training course on injury control and traffic safety. The course was held from the 2-4 October 2017 in Johannesburg.

The course was held with an interdisciplinary audience including law enforcers, police officers, urban and traffic planners, road engineers, researchers, behavioural scientists, medical professionals, emergency services, biomedical engineers and civil society activists, and other social actors working in the area of injury control, research, transportation planning, pedestrian and road safety, trauma, and traffic and law enforcement. It offered state-of-the-art information in the field and focused on local, national, and global perspectives to the road safety challenge. The course objectives included: (1) the latest findings and methodologies for the prevention of traffic accidents and injuries, transportation planning and enforcement, (2) perspectives, policies and practices which have been shown to be successful or have not worked in the past, and (3) strategies to develop, improve or initiate programmes in traffic injury planning and control.

Specific topics for the course included: "Injury, traffic and vulnerable road users"; "Human factors, speed, motorisation and urbanism"; "Road and traffic safety design"; "Education"; and "Trauma and post-trauma care and policy". There were a number of invited presentations, these included: "Traffic safety: A childhood perspective" and "Fracture patterns in child survivors and non-survivors after a severe traffic crash" (Prof. van As, ChildSafe and Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital); "The importance of human factor research within the Decade of Action framework" (K. Venter, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research); "Reduction of risk and casualties among non-motorized transport users in South Africa: Human factors leading to injury" (Dr. H. Ribbens, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research); "Concept of injury as a disease: Implications for prevention and control", "Speed and traffic safety", and "Penalties and sanctions: What works in traffic safety" (Prof. D. Mohan, IITDelhi); "The Road Transport Management System: A self-regulation initiative in heavy vehicle transport to improve road safety in South Africa" and "Improving the safety of heavy vehicles in South Africa through a performance-based standards approach to vehicle design" (Dr. Nordengen, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research); "Child pedestrian safety knowledge, behaviour and road injury in Cape Town, South Africa" and "Parental supervision and discomfort with children walking to school in low-income communities" (Ms. A. Simons, VIPRU).

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The Opening Address was delivered by Advocate Msibi, the CEO of the Road Traffic Management Corporation, who welcomed the presenters and participants, and commended the organisers for hosting this course. In his address, he provided a grim reality of the impact of road traffic fatalities and its effects on loss of life, family disruption and the economy. His commitment to engaging in a multidisciplinary approach to the prevention and reduction of road traffic injuries and fatalities provided a sense of purpose and set the tone for the training course. The course was intense and interactive; it concluded with a meeting between IITDehli and VIPRU representatives with traffic personnel from the Johannesburg City on the many policies and practical challenges, due to the disproportionate impact of road traffic fatalities in South Africa, and the multiple strategies that may be required to more effectively enable the UN Decade of Action.

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