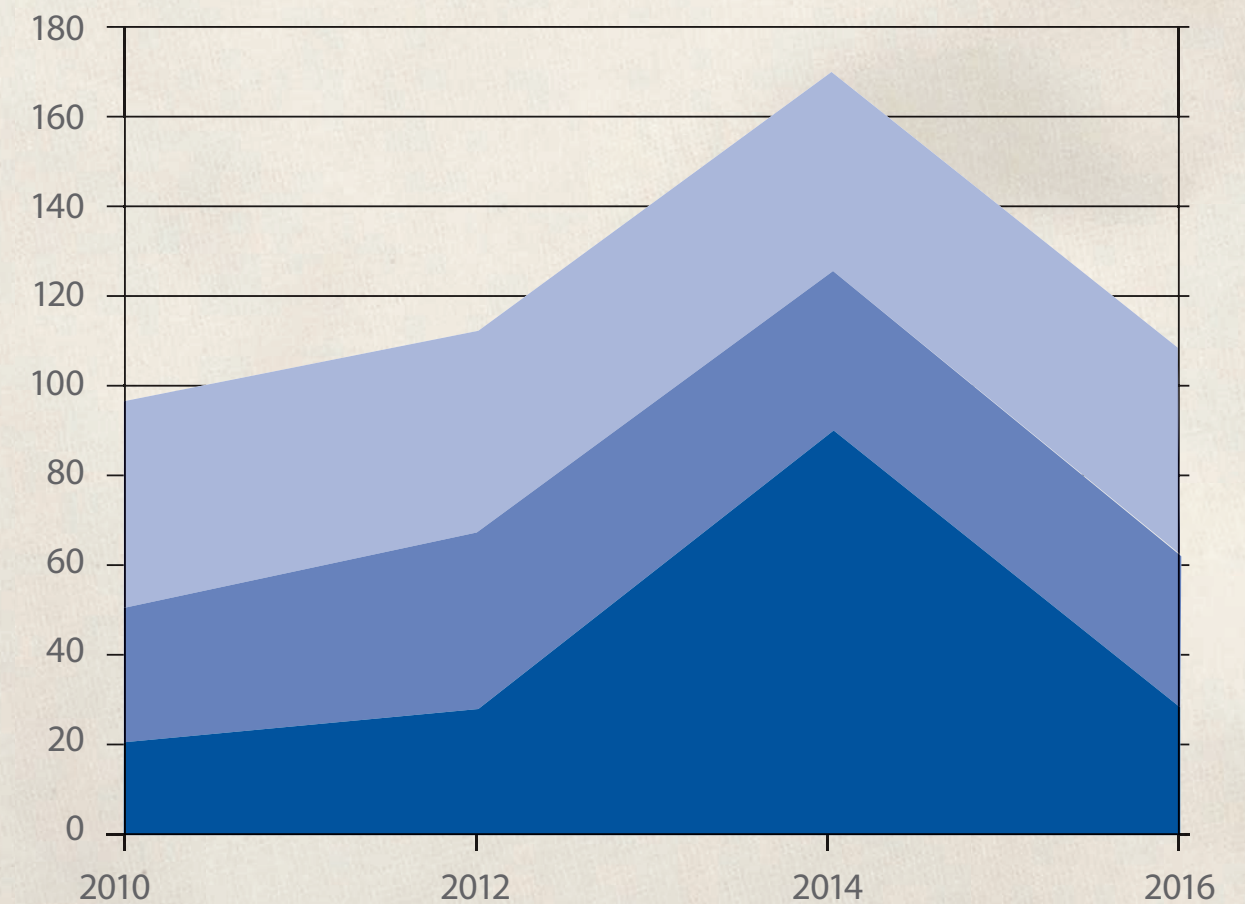


Fatal injury surveillance in mortuaries and hospitals: a manual for practitioners



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FOREWORD

The old adage “*you can’t manage what you don’t measure*” has great resonance in the area of injury and violence prevention where, despite many efforts, data on the number and type of injury deaths are still very sparse. Only 34 countries routinely produce high-quality cause of death data that include information on external causes of death; almost all of these are high-income countries in the Americas, Europe and the Western Pacific – not places where the bulk of the injury and violence problem lies. Of the 5.1 million injury-related deaths that occur every year, 90% happen in low- and middle-income countries. These are the countries where we need to be able to measure the scale of the problem. Injuries and violence are not random events – they have identifiable risks and protective factors, and thus are among public health’s winnable battles.

WHO’s work on data and statistics is a core activity mandated by the Organization’s Constitution. As part of its normative functions, WHO sets standards for global public health information. Its priority in relation to injury surveillance is to help countries obtain more accurate and comprehensive data. Over the past decade, guidance in this regard has been provided to countries through three documents: *Guidance for surveillance of injuries due to landmines and unexploded ordnance* (2000), *Injury surveillance guidelines* (2001), and *Guidelines for conducting community surveys on injuries and violence* (2004). All three publications are primarily designed to assist in the collection of data on non-fatal injuries and violence.

This new manual, which focuses on improving the documentation of fatal injuries and violence, is therefore an important addition to the trilogy. It complements ongoing international efforts to improve the gathering of mortality statistics, and aligns with both the International Classification of Diseases and International Classification of External Causes of Injury. It aims to provide guidance to countries on how to set up a fatal injury surveillance system, and contains step-by-step instructions, data collection tools, coding standards and case studies that can be adapted and used to meet local needs. In comparison to many other causes of death that require complex and costly investigations, most external causes of death are readily ascertained through relatively simple and immediate investigations.

Produced in partnership with the Department of Forensic Medicine at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, this new publication, *Fatal injury surveillance in mortuaries and hospitals: a manual for practitioners* provides information that we hope will lead to improvements in both the quality and quantity of data on fatal injuries and violence, which in turn can be used to develop national policies and programmes that will save lives.

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