



ER docs happy as CPR training made compulsory in Ontario

In a precedent-setting move, cardiopulmonary resuscitation has been made part of the curriculum for all Ontario high school students beginning this fall.



Grade 9 student in Orleans, Ont., learns CPR

The Advanced Coronary Treatment (ACT) Foundation of Canada has advocated school-based CPR training since 1993. ACT's pilot programs in Ottawa, Toronto and rural Ontario have already taught CPR to 18 000 students in 80 schools. The program is also under way in Montreal and Laval, Que., and Sydney, NS. Inclusion in the Ontario curriculum is the first province-wide commitment.

"We hope this will set a model across the country," says ACT executive director Sandra Clarke.

Substantial evidence now shows that CPR is an important link in the chain of survival, says Dr. Justin Maloney, an emergency room physician at the Ottawa Hospital and a partner with ACT in promoting the cross-Canada initiative. The chain includes early 911 calls, CPR, defibrillation and advanced care. "The thing a lot of communities don't have is a number of people trained in CPR," says Maloney.

That will change this fall when 150 000 Grade 9 students take CPR as part of their physical education and health course. The teachers will receive their instruction from the Red Cross and St. John's Ambulance, while ACT, a national, nonprofit organization, supplies manuals and mannequins. ACT's corporate partners are Astra Pharma Inc., Hoechst Marion Roussel Canada, Merck Frosst Canada Inc. and Parke-Davis, a division of Warner-Lambert.

Not only does the program teach students a life-saving skill, says Maloney, it also improves self-esteem and teaches heart health, and how to identify and react to emergency situations.

The program already appears to be working. A 17-year-old Ottawa girl, Kasia Smetny-Sova, recently used her classroom-acquired CPR skills to save the life of a 69-year-old stranger.

For more information, phone 800 465-9111 or contact www.actfoundation.ca — *Barbara Sibbald*

Cost of seat-belt-related whiplash injuries rising

Seat belts may deserve credit for saving lives but they've also helped create millions of whiplash patients around the world, says a professor of orthopedic surgery at the University of Manchester.

In an address during the recent Whiplash-Associated Disorders World Congress in Vancouver, Dr. Charles Galasko noted that the number of patients with whiplash-related complaints more than tripled the year after seat belts were introduced in the UK in 1983. "The increase in the numbers injured in road traffic accidents means that around 2500 [traffic accident] patients will be seen this year in our hospital. In the last 4 to 5 years, 50% of these patients have had whiplash injuries."

Galasko said awareness of the significance and impact of whiplash has been influenced by under-recording and misclassification. In the UK, injuries are classified as fatal, serious or slight, with whiplash relegated to the final category. He said as many as 45% of whiplash patients in the UK are not included in national injury data and suggested that there are probably close to 250 000 new whiplash patients in the UK every year; in the US, he said, the total probably approaches 1 million cases.

If the prevalence of whiplash is increasing, are costs following suit? "There is financial cost to the patient and his family and to the community," said Galasko. "In 1991 currency, the estimated average cost was

£10 000 [Cdn\$25 000] for a whiplash injury, including what the Department of Transport in the UK calculated as a subjective element of pain and suffering worth £4000. If you multiply that by the number of people injured per capita, it's currently costing us £3.1 billion per annum."

Galasko said the issue should receive more attention. "I don't know what the case is in North America, but our Medical Research Council considers whiplash to be unimportant and says money should go into genetic research and not clinical conditions like whiplash. But unless we have the support of the MRC and other scientific organizations, this problem is only going to get worse." — © *Eleanor LeBourdais*