

Review of: "A Review of the Processes and Procedures of Road Traffic Accident Mortality Data Collection in Zambia"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

This multi-disciplinary paper examines the important area of the collection and collation of data on road traffic accidents (RTCs) in Zambia. The World Health Organization believes that RTC deaths are seriously under-reported in Africa as a whole. This paper examines reasons why this happens in Zambia.

Some thoughts on the paper:

1 The introduction and literature review should be combined as they cover the same ground and there is needless repetition. No indication is given as to how the literature cited was found in a literature search (no search criteria, or date of search, number of articles found, number of articles relevant to the study). Since the main thrust of the paper is the multi-disciplinary review of data flows, the literature review should become part of the background to the reported study.

2 The methods outline the way the study was conducted, but not how the interviews/meetings were approached. For example, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and the like. Methods should be reported in enough detail that another researcher could repeat the work, either in Zambia or elsewhere, and that the reader can understand how you found what you found and assess the reported work for themselves.

3 Similarly, more detail on the comprehensive review and analysis of the business processes pertaining to the collection of road safety data in Zambia is needed. How was this done? Various methods of review are mentioned, but more detail is needed. What standards were used to assess the processes?

4 The methods section jumps around between various aspects of the methods. It would make for easier reading if the methods section followed a logical flow of information, perhaps even the flow as shown in the figure, with all information pertaining to that part of the study in one place.

5 Results - these are reported in broad terms. But the reported methods should allow for more detailed reporting of the results, including quantitative data.

6 Figure 1 would benefit from explanations of the abbreviations used (e.g., RTC, MCCD, EMS) since all figures and tables should stand alone and not need the (international) reader to refer to the text of the paper. Also, 'local authority issues a bur' needs revising. Please explain: what do the drum and document figures stand for? What are the red circles? Why do some of the yellow lozenges have a + sign but not all, and what does it mean?

7 Mwale is cited for the approximately 42% of RTC deaths which are captured in hospital and CRVS databases but not included in the police database - how does this compare with our data?

8 You need to show why your “.. findings indicate significant underreporting of RTC deaths in the police database” and not just state this without evidence.

9. Similarly, points 7 & 8 need to be considered in the other sections (hospital and CRVS data).

10 Your conclusion that you “.. found that the actual number of traffic deaths is far greater than the official data indicates” is not substantiated by the results as they are reported. Nor should you report this discrepancy as if you have discovered this. You should report this as confirming the WHO position. Humility is always a strong point.

11 One thing that is largely missing throughout the paper and only raised towards the end is the underreporting by the public of RTCs. It would be helpful to give some indication of how this might affect the findings of the study and the recommendations made at the end. The best integrated, multidisciplinary, electronic records will founder if the public is not reporting RTCs.

Thank you for this paper. There is a lot here that can change and improve RTC reporting in Zambia, and possibly across Africa. However, the paper could be much stronger - and, therefore, the recommendations also much stronger - if the relevant data were reported so that the reader might see for him/herself what the current situation in Zambia is like. This will also give a baseline on which future reviews in Zambia, and comparable work elsewhere, can be built.