

To the Editor:

Sharp Decline of Injury Mortality Rate in a Developing Country

In the past decade, the number of vehicles, including motorcycles, automobiles, and trucks, has grown sharply and exceeded 10 million in Taiwan. Currently, every 1.5 people owns a motorcycle and an increase in vehicles would bring a rise in traffic accidents. Surprisingly, the mortality rate of traffic accidents was kept at 7,500 people per year from 1990 to 1995. It has dropped significantly from about 7,500 in 1995 to 5,488 in 2001, or a 26.8% decrease in 5 years. Various reasons led to this phenomenon in Taiwan and the most significant factor would be the vigorous governmental traffic safety related policies and campaign including:^{1,2}

1994 Enforcement of helmet use in Taipei City

1997 Implementation of helmet law in June

1998 Implementation of Emergency Medical System

1999 Executed regulations of seat belt enforcement and usage of cellular phone while driving and strict prohibition of drink and drive

2001 Children's safety chair usage Campaign

Other reasons may be the establishment of bus lanes and MRT, improvement of road conditions, and an increase of traffic load.

Up to a certain economic level, an increase in wealth will correspond to a rise in traffic deaths, and only a few

countries has reached this level.^{3,4} An active policy taken by the government was essential in improving traffic infrastructure and trauma care. Therefore, the increase of governmental attention on improving traffic quality can be seen as a sign that Taiwan is acknowledging the present epidemic of traffic injury and evolving toward a developed country. Furthermore, a decrease in traffic injury mortality

rate can be used as an indicator of economic progression to a developed country.

Wen-Ta Chiu, MD, PhD
Yuh-Shan Ho, PhD
Yee-Shuan Lee, BS
Taipei Medical University

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