

Drowning Science will benefit from research conducted by experienced lifeguards assisted by academics - Practical example

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Drowning science took a great fuel injection after ILS started to organize a world conference on drowning prevention (1). Since the first conference in San Diego (1998), the number and quality of papers submitted has increased sharply. Still, papers are predominantly from epidemiologists, health professionals and university swim teachers around the world with little to any submissions from lifeguards. The language has also been a barrier for experienced lifeguards to join the drowning science domain. These have been the main underlying reasons for the gap in papers with tangible impact and applicability on real lifeguarding situations. Therefore, there is a high demand to be fulfilled by professionals with practical experience, who know better what is happening in the field of drowning lifesaving world – the lifeguards. Our objective was to provide new strategies to support the development and implementation of research projects among lifeguards.

Methods

A partnership project between Brazil and Portugal to encourage and support new research from Portuguese-speaking lifeguards, targeting the World Conference on Drowning Prevention (WCDP), in Malaysia 2015, was developed and applied through IDRA – the International Drowning Research Alliance, founded by a group of drowning research scholars, with the main objective of developing and supporting drowning research. Financial support and partnership was raised by some of the members to hire 2 consultant experts on drowning research to motivate and assist lifeguards to: find a good research question based on their daily needs, structure a study protocol or research plan, exercise the possibilities, collect data, debate appropriately the issue and attempt to come up with a conclusion that may aid them during their duties. All the support was conducted in Portuguese and only after the agreement of all was the abstract translated to English by the consultants, the official language of the conference.

Results

Around 305 abstracts were submitted to the WCDP 2015 with 200 accepted for oral/poster presentation. The partnership Brazil-Portugal has submitted 37 papers to the first round and 36 were accepted. This represents 18.5% of all submitted abstracts. A total of 15 different authors and 35 different co-authors were involved and of those 17 participated for the first time in their lifeguard career in such a project. The abstracts subject was well distributed along the 5 conference topics presenting relevant questions, with 9 been raised for the first time.

Conclusion

Since the first scientific conference organized by ILS, a lot has been accomplished on drowning science moving from a solely medical perspective to a much more broad and inclusive content with topics ranging from prevention, rescue, partnership, alliances, psychological issues, to pre-hospital care and many other new questions regarding real lifeguarding world have been raised and answered. This new kind approach to assist drowning science lead by IDRA, with the support of SOBRASA (Brazil) and ISN (Portugal) has shown that a lot can be done to motivate lifeguards to work in their own language to develop and implement drowning research projects and opened a new and important door for many real questions regarding lifeguards' daily needs.

References

1. Queiroga, A.C., "Trends in peer-reviewed drowning research: evidence of an uneven effort around the world" Lifesaving Foundation Drowning Prevention and Rescue Conference, 27th-29th September 2012, Carlow, Ireland