

## Water related deaths during 2 summer seasons in Spain

PhD José Palacios-Aguilar<sup>2</sup>, PhD Ana Catarina Queiroga<sup>1</sup>, PhD Antonio Caballero-Oliver<sup>3</sup>, PhD Maria Castillo-Obeso<sup>2</sup>, PhD Roberto Barcala-Furelos<sup>1</sup>, PhD Cristian Abelairas-Gómez<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>REMOSS - Performance and motor skills of lifesaving Group, Faculty of Education and Sport Sciences, University of Vigo, Pontevedra, Spain, <sup>2</sup>GIASS - Grupo de Investigación en actividades acuáticas y socorrismo, Faculty of Sport Sciences and Physical Education, University of A Coruña, A Coruña, Spain, <sup>3</sup>Hospital Universitario "Virgen del Rocío", , Spain

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### Introduction

People commonly established their civilizations around water exposing them to the risk of drowning. As beach and pool attendance increased steadily since the beginning of the 20th century, both for leisure and exercise purposes people became even more at risk of drowning.

The recently published WHO Global report on drowning estimates that drowning kills 372 000 people each year, making it the third leading cause of death from unintentional injury worldwide. The estimated death toll is even more alarming because official data categorization methods for drowning exclude: drowning deaths caused by flood disasters, by transport-related incidents, or intentional drowning deaths by suicide or homicide.

Available data show that there are substantial differences in drowning fatality rates across the globe. Still, comparisons are difficult even among developed countries because, even in countries where counts of drowning deaths appear relatively complete, important basic details about the event are often lacking, including information on the location of drowning, the intent and the circumstances. In particular Spain has no national surveillance system that defines the circumstances surrounding a drowning event well enough to enable the development of effective preventive strategies. Both lack of information and misclassification have an effect on overall estimates of the impact of drowning. Many researchers have therefore challenged the utility of newspapers for unintentional injury surveillance and described newspapers reports as a useful source for assessment of risk factors for drowning, offering hope for improved surveillance where official sources are poor, or not accessible in a timely and detailed way.

The aim of this study was thus to: analyse the unintentional drowning deaths occurring in Spain during summer in recent years, and identify opportunities for improvement when it comes to preventing these deaths.

### Method

This is a quantitative prospective and descriptive study, covering the period of four months of two summer beach seasons in Spain (1June-30September, 2012-2013). A Google alert was activated using the words "ahogado" and "ahogada". Daily emails were received with links to the websites with further information where these words appeared. As inclusion criterion only news in which the words "ahogado"/"ahogada" appeared related to leisure and free time activities were considered. As exclusion criterion, those reports related to illegal immigration (the attempt to reach the Spanish coast by any means (boating, floating devices or swimming), industrial accidents (professional fishermen) or major disasters (floods or flash floods) were not considered.

### Results

During the period studied a total of 2.200 news were received, an average of 9 news/day. Almost entirely, the news came from digital, local or national newspapers from Latin American countries. In Spain, from 1st of June to the 30th of September 2012, news on events resulting in death in the aquatic environment in Spain corresponded to 186 victims. During the same period in 2013, the number of fatal drownings was 181. During this presentation the complete profile of the victims will be provided, regarding variables such as: sex and age of the victim, activity immediately prior to drowning, type of aquatic environment, time of the day, and geographic location, among others.

### Conclusions

Our study has a clear social value by providing results that allow a more complete understanding of the circumstances in which deaths occur in the aquatic environment, making it possible to foster measures to prevent such deaths. These findings could be used to elicit an appropriate public and private response public in terms of sufficient human and material rescue resources, which enables to avoid accidents and intervene immediately if they happen.