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INJURY PREVENTION - A STRATEGIC PRIORITY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH?

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Safety 2010 World Conference Wed 22 Sept 2010 Session D7

Are injury prevention, environmental health and public health interconnected?

- Public health includes health protection
- Health protection includes environmental health
- *Does environmental health include injury prevention?*

What is Environmental Health?

- *Those aspects of human health and disease that are determined by factors in the environment.*
- *The theory and practice of assessing and controlling factors in the environment that can potentially affect health*

What is injury?

The acute transfer of energy from the *environment* to human tissue

- Mechanical
- Thermal
- Electrical
- Chemical

Or

impairment of bodily function due to lack of a vital *environmental* element (air, water, warmth)

“The term *environmental health* is associated overwhelmingly with a narrow range of activities centring on the enforcement of regulations relating to specific toxic, infectious or allergenic agents.

“...one of the most serious threats to human health – injury – has been largely excluded from the environmental health paradigm.”

Morris et al (2006)

Our assertion

Injury is an environmental health issue *par excellence*.

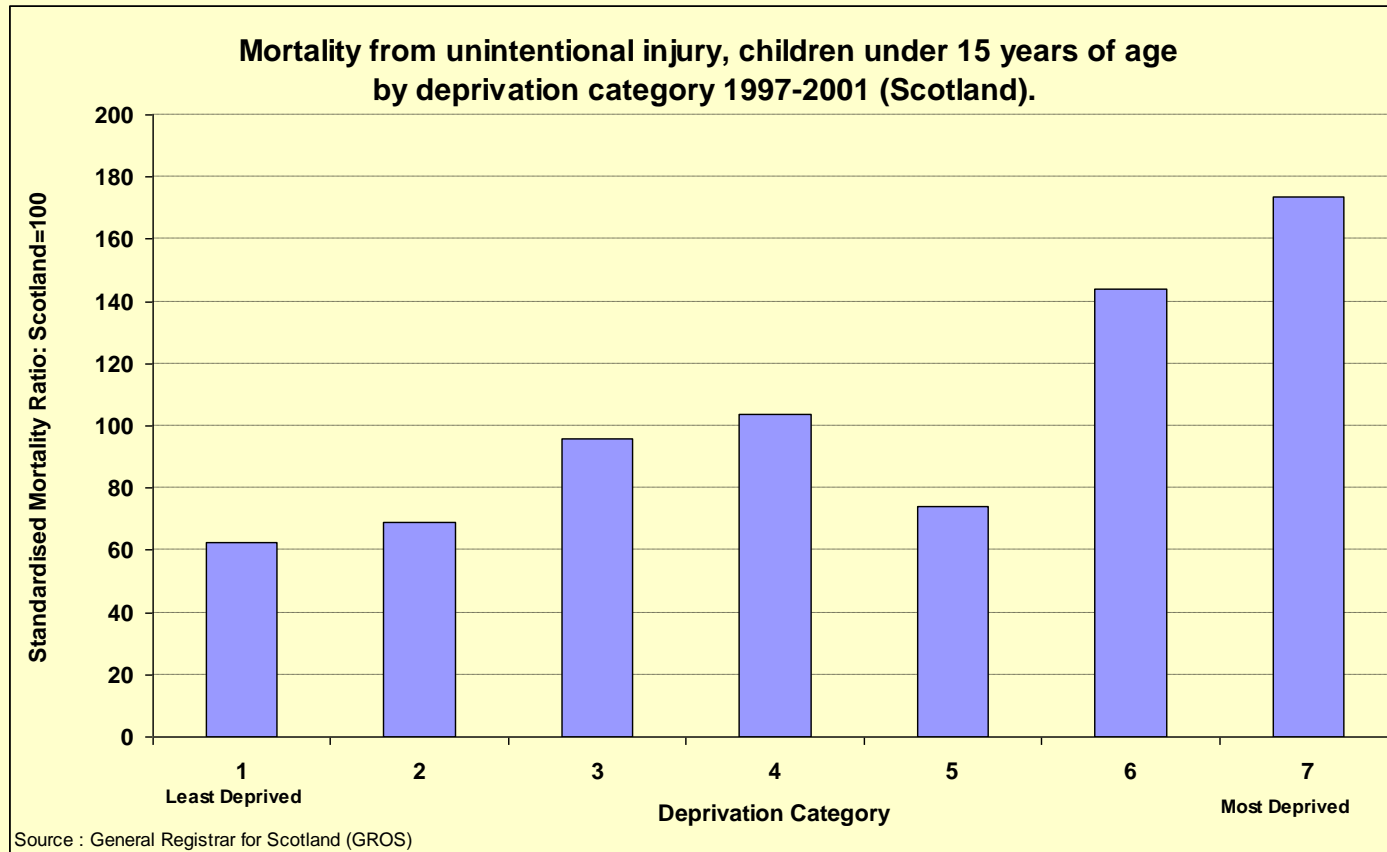
Injury merits consideration as a major strategic priority by

- the public health community
- environmental health professionals

INJURY IS A GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH CHALLENGE

- Approx 5 million deaths annually worldwide
- Leading cause of death in children/young people
- Deaths are only tip of injury iceberg
- Injury mortality rising in developing countries, falling in developed
- Most injuries unintentional but pattern changing

Scottish Injury Mortality (1997-2001)



The 3 Es of Injury Prevention

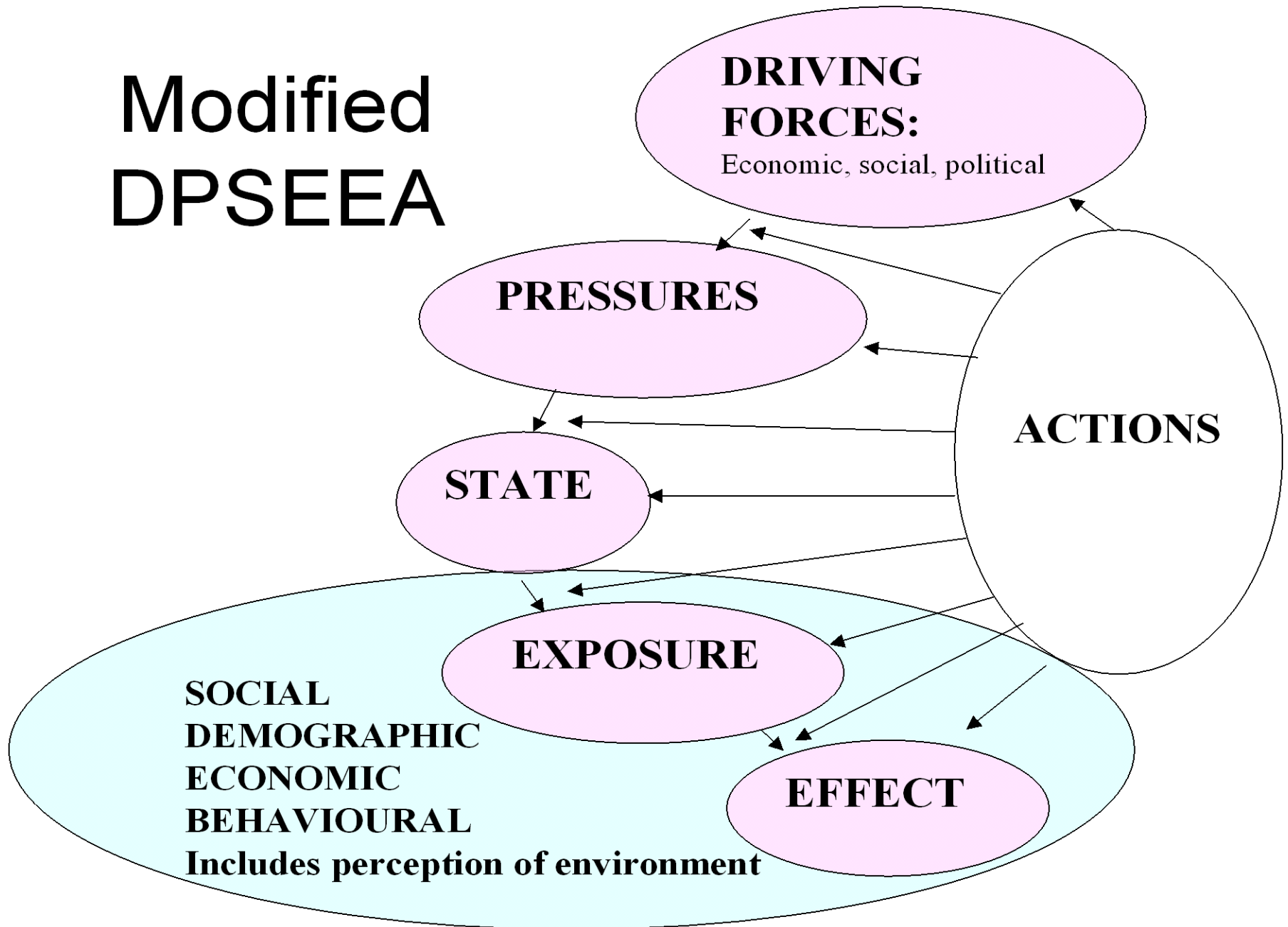
- EDUCATION
- ENFORCEMENT OF LEGISLATION
- **ENVIRONMENT/ENGINEERING**

The Haddon Matrix

Example of Pedestrian Head Injury

•	Host	Agent	Environment
Pre-injury	Child running	Car speeding	Rain
Injury	Skull fracture	Bumper impact	Microbes
Post-injury	Coma	Unskilled first aid	Hospital care

Modified DPSEEA



European initiatives on environmental health and children

- SCALE (EC)
- CEHAPE (WHO)
- CSAP (EC and WHO)

SCALE

EU Environmental Health Strategy:

Science

Children

Awareness

Legislation

Evaluation

CEHAPE

Children's Environmental Health Action Plan
for Europe

Injury prevention is one of the Regional
Priority Goals of CEHAPE

CSAP

- **Child Safety Action Plan for Europe**
- International initiative supported by WHO/EU
- Scotland and Wales participate in UK
- Benchmarking data

CEHAPE and SCALE

share a concern for the environmental impact
on children's health and on enhancing the
evidence base for action

UK initiatives on environmental health and children

- UK: Children's Environmental Health Strategy 2009
- Scotland: Good Places, Better Health 2008

Good Places, Better Health

- Aims to deliver environments promoting human health, wellbeing and equality of opportunity
- Initial priorities around child health, wellbeing and safety (IP)
- Focuses on need for better evidence to highlight gaps and point to solutions
- Linked to Environmental Determinants of Public Health in Scotland (EDPHiS), a multi-disciplinary study to support the policy development

Key messages

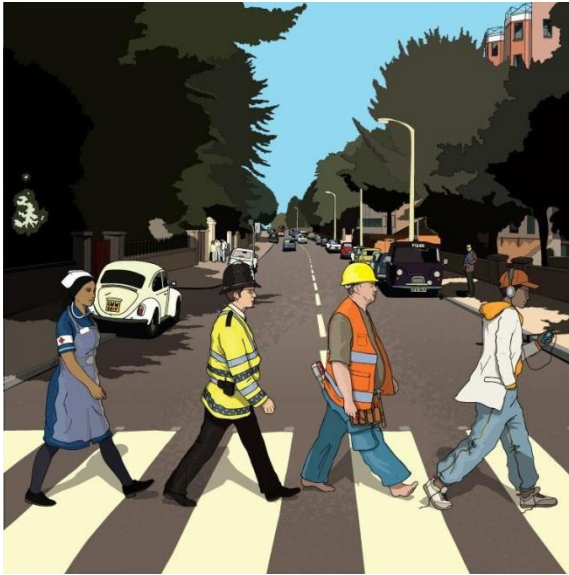
- IP already occurs in health promotion, consumer safety, occupational health, police, fire etc departments
- Efforts are fragmented, uncoordinated and hindered by the lack of a strategic “home” for injury prevention
- Integrating IP efforts within an environmental health strategic framework will promote effectiveness
- A robust infrastructure already exists for environmental health and health protection in the UK and elsewhere
- Delivery is possible with minimal additional resources

Conclusions

- IP's natural strategic “home” lies within environmental health and its broader domain of health protection
- This approach has potential to co-ordinate and enhance existing IP efforts
- Injury prevention and safety promotion should be strategic priorities for environmental health



"Peach Tree in Bloom" Van Gogh, 1888



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