



## *The Bone and Joint Decade 2000-2010* **PRESS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Doctors Put Road Safety on Top with Free Helmets**

**30 November 2008 | Pune (INDIA)** – On Monday a simple act by hundreds of international advocates will mean that fewer young people will be injured or killed on the roads of Pune this year. Members of the Bone and Joint Decade (BJD) working with the Indian Network will take to the streets of Pune on December 1st to hand out 1000 safety helmets freely to motorcycle and moped riders on the city's busy roads, and to encourage safe riding practices.

"This message is literally a matter of life or death in a country where countless motorcyclists share the road with cars, trucks and buses in a chaotic traffic stream," said Dr Wahid Al-Kharusi, member of the United Nations Road Safety Commission and BJD ISC member. Numerous studies have shown that the simple act of wearing a helmet lowers a motorcycle rider's risk of fatal injury by 30% and reduces the risk of traumatic brain injury by 70%.

The Public Walk, starting at 11:30am on Shivajinagar, on Monday, December 1st and finishing at Sancheti Hospital Parking Lot is open to the public and 1000 helmets will be given away to riders who need them. As an outreach programme, it is designed to create awareness of the importance of helmet-wearing and to stimulate behaviour change in road users. The event is part of the 2008 BJD World Network Conference, organised in conjunction with the Indian Rheumatology Association annual meeting, and in line with the BJD's Trauma Reduction programme. According to Dr Arvind Chopra, BJD India Coordinator and head of the Centre for Rheumatic Diseases in Pune, a key aim of the action is to open up dialogue with local political authorities on the importance of facilitating the use of helmets amongst road users through awareness campaigns, positive actions, helmet purchase, and the enforcement of helmet legislation.

#### **A Matter of Life or Death**

Wearing a helmet is a single most effective way of reducing head injuries and fatalities resulting from a crash (helmets can reduce the risk and severity of head injuries by 70%) while riding a motorcycle or mopeds, yet young road users are the least likely to wear helmets. A study in Malaysia found that only 54% used helmets properly, 21% used them improperly. And 25% did not wear them at all. "This is likely due to many reasons, including financial cost, availability of not safe and endorsed helmets and lack of knowledge of the importance of helmet wearing," said Dr Marcos Musafir Trauma Expert at the World Health Organization in Geneva.

#### **Harsh Realities**

1. In high-income countries, motorcycle fatalities typically comprises around 5%-15% of overall traffic fatalities. By contrast in low- and middle-income countries, percentage of traffic fatalities which involve motorcycle riders is nearly 30% in India, 60% in Malaysia and a shocking 70-90% in Thailand.
2. In China ownership of two-wheelers between 1987 – 2001 grew from 23% to 63% with corresponding increase in the proportion of road fatalities sustained by motorcyclists rising from 7.5% to 19% over the same period.
3. Head and neck injuries are the main cause of death, severe injury and disability among motorcycle users.

#### **The Simple Act of wearing a Safety Helmet...**

Decreases the risk of sustaining a head injury and severity of injuries by around 72%  
Decreases the likelihood of dying from a head injury by up to 39%  
Decreases the cost of care and time spent in the hospital associated with crashes  
Protects the well-being of the family socio-economically

Road traffic injuries are a major global public health and developmental problem. Their magnitude is expected to rise considerably in the years ahead. They are preventable but we must all do our part. International cooperation is crucial to strengthening national road safety efforts. Last month the Bone and Joint Decade published a report on the man-made disaster of Road Traffic Injury Around the World. The report is a call **to arms, indicating the** current state of the problem, as well as proven measures which governments can take to improve the situation in their countries. This article is available for download on [www.bjdonline.org](http://www.bjdonline.org) and for more information on the Road Safety Initiative see the WHO [http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/road\\_traffic/en/](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/road_traffic/en/) and the UN <http://www.unece.org/trans/globalroadsafetyweek/rsun1rs.html>

### **About the Bone and Joint Decade**

Launched in January 2000, the Bone and Joint Decade is an NGO comprised of National Action Networks in 62 countries and with the support of more than 750 related organisations globally. Its mission is to advance understanding of musculoskeletal disorders worldwide through research and to improve the quality of life for those affected. The Bone and Joint Decade initiative works closely with the United Nations and the World Health Organization.

Prof Lars Lidgren, Chairman of the Bone and Joint Decade, and Head of the Department of Orthopaedics at the University of Lund, said: "Trauma and musculoskeletal disorders are the leading cause of disability around the world, affecting one out of every four adults and accounting for 25% of the total cost of illness also in developing countries." The Decade aims to build awareness of the burden of musculoskeletal conditions by educating the public and driving research and legislation to improve prevention and treatment.

Some facts:

- Every 30 seconds someone dies in a road traffic accident, and in the same time frame three others are severely injured.
- Road traffic accidents are the leading cause of death and disability for people under age 45.
- Several hundred million people worldwide already suffer from joint diseases such as osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis, and this figure is set to increase exponentially due to the predicted doubling of the number of people over age 50 by the year 2020.
- One in every three women over age 50 will suffer a fracture caused by osteoporosis.
- Up to 80% of people will suffer from back pain during their lives.
- Back pain is the second leading cause of work-place sick leave.

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