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Social Complexity and Risk for Paediatric Burn Injury: A Systematic Review

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Background:

Social complexity in health outcomes has been attributed to greater risk of injury, adverse health consequences and early death in a variety of populations. To determine what social complexity factors (SCFs) have been associated with burn injury in children, a systematic review of the literature was performed.

Objective:

To review published literature analyzing the relationships between social and environmental factors and paediatric burn injury. Reviewing literature to determine gaps in knowledge and guide future research into SCFs and their influence on childhood burns.

Methods:

Two different databases (PubMed and SCOPUS) were searched for articles related to environmental and social determinants of burn injury. Selected literature examined SCFs to establish the strength of evidence in relation to incidence of burn injury in children. The extent of factors and the most common social complexities were reviewed.

Results:

The 641 manuscripts found in PubMed and 327 from SCOPUS were initially reviewed for duplication and English language. Subsequently, manuscripts were selected for relevance based on titles followed by reviewing abstracts. 41 manuscripts were reviewed in their entirety. The literature supports a relationship between an increased incidence of paediatric burns in lower income families, children with behavioural disorders, fewer years of parental education and children residing in rural setting. The majority of reports came from Europe followed by Australia, and scattered information from other countries.

Conclusion:

SCFs in the environment of the child are associated with an increased risk of burn injury in children. The literature supports the influence of lower income, lower parental education, behavioural disorders and living rurally with an increased incidence of injury. By identifying children at increased risk, it is possible to develop targeted burn prevention and education programs to decrease the incidence of burn injury.