

Burn Center Employee Travels to South Africa to Share Expertise

Ernest Grant, RN, MSN Outreach Clinician of our staff traveled to South Africa in August to conduct a Train-the-Trainer workshop on the South African version of the Learn-Not-To-Burn Preschool program. This is the culmination of an eight year project on which Grant and several colleagues have worked.



In 2000, the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) Center for High-Risk Outreach, received a request for expert technical assistance to help reduce the number of fire and burn related injuries in South Africa by using the Learn-Not-To-Burn Curriculum. The NFPA is the authority on fire, electrical and building safety. NFPA develops, publishes, and disseminates more than 300 consensus codes and standards intended to minimize the possibility and effects of fire and other risks. Virtually every building, process, service, design, and installation in society today is affected by NFPA documents. Grant currently serves on the Board of Directors for NFPA.

In order to meet this request a number of challenges and some basic information was needed. Grant and his colleagues were dispatched to perform a general sweep of information regarding fire and life safety issues in South Africa. In 2000 at the completion of their first visit Grant and colleagues reported that South Africa faced the following major public health issues that related to fires and burns:

- Shack fires (formal and informal settlements)
- Burns (2nd & 3rd leading cause of death among children/elderly)
- Security bars/barbed wire fences around homes
- Traffic-related injuries
- Alcohol-related injuries
- Insufficient health care (access and delivery)
- Paraffin ingestion



The next step was to examine the existence and type of infrastructural support for fire and life safety education programs such as the national and provincial educational systems, the fire service and national public health. It was discovered that there was little or no fire and life safety education being taught in the high risk areas throughout South Africa. Even in places where such education existed, it was very sparse and concentrated in traditional "affluent" regions of the country. The concept of something as simple as a smoke alarm (something we take for granted) was never heard of...or was only in use in affluent homes. Infrastructural support was very limited in and among the various governmental agencies. There was little or

no communication between/among state or local provincial agencies regarding this issue, thus no standardized educational program was in place. Little or no resources were available to address this devastating problem. Grant and colleagues confirmed that there was a great need for fire and life safety education as well as the establishment of a standardized fire and life safety education program. Upon consultation with various individuals and organizations in South Africa, the following plan was established.

1. A standardized program to train fire service and community members on fire safety education methods and process will be conducted.
2. Introduce the Public Information Emergency Response (PIER) process to the South African Fire Service.
3. Provide assistance on fire safety and unintentional injury prevention interventions through the use of such programs as: Community involvement, Fire Cadet Program, Safe Place.
4. Provide assistance with the establishment of a South African based specific–Learn-Not-To-Burn preschool curriculum.

Over the next two years, countless conference calls, e-mails and webinars were conducted to achieve goals 1-4 listed above. Starting in 2004, they continued their work in person, traveling once again to South Africa. Several seminars were conducted at various locations surrounding Johannesburg. A special emphasis was made to invite other life safety organizations, national and provincial ministries and corporations who may have had a special interest to promote fire and burn safety. The purpose of the workshops was to get all organizations to speak with one voice, and not to use fragmented messages when promoting fire and burn prevention.

The conclusion of this trip culminated with the establishment of standardized messages and a goal for future endeavors. The following consensus was established regarding burn safety messages:

1. Messages will be divided into age specific groups.
2. Messages will be divided into specific causes, i.e., scalds, flame, behavior, etc.
3. Messages will be prioritized so that they are appropriate for the age groups; messages will be short & concise, easy to remember and consistent.
4. Messages will be delivered around identified risk factors (poverty, children left unattended, cultural practices, education level, socio-economic and disabilities).

A list of “next step goals” included:

1. Start working together as a workgroup and not independently.
2. Stop re-inventing the wheel – share information, strategies and programs
3. Open clear channel of communication with other organizations.
4. Workgroup to determine if there is a need to progress from workgroup to coalition.
5. Whom may they consider to invite to join?
6. Gather more solid research data regarding burn injuries in SA.
7. Gather more information about fire and burn safety programs already in existence...which is good, which are not good.
8. Establish more stronger and more formal relationship with NFPA
9. Plan next workshop for May, 2005.



In 2005, Ms. Lisa Braxton (NFPA), Mr. Kwame Cooper (Los Angeles Fire Chief) and Mr. Ernest Grant returned to South Africa to continue the work that has been established. Again multiple seminars were conducted in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Lenasia to follow-up on the commitments made in 2004. In addition, seminar

attendees were given intensive updates of educational strategies, networking and resource funding. There were three strategic outcome of this trip which revealed the commitment of the coalition.

First, all “Next-step” goals established in 2004 were met or exceeded their expectation. There was a consensus established by the workgroup to form a coalition. More accurate research data was garnered and safety messages became specific and unified.

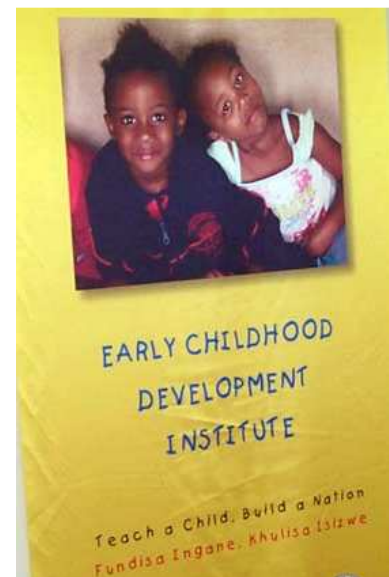
Second, a formalized commitment to formally endorse an educational program between the ministries of Education, Health and EMS. The Education ministry would ensure such a program would become a mandated curriculum tool.

The third strategic outcome was the official drafting and signage of a licensing agreement between the NFPA and the National Burn Prevention Reference Group to establish a South African version of the Learn-Not-To-Burn Curriculum.

Starting in late 2006, a task force made up of US and South African representatives was formed to begin the work of designing a South African version of Preschool LNTB. The South African version of the Learn-Not-Burn Preschool Program was adapted to reflect South African customs. Numerous conference calls, faxes, e-mails and hours were invested to ensure the completion of this task. The US technical review team consisted of Ms. Pat Mieszala, Chief Kwame Cooper, Ms. Lisa Braxton, Ms. Sharon Gamache and Mr. Ernest Grant. This project was completed in early 2008.

On August 14, 2009, Ms. Lisa Braxton, Mr. Kwame Cooper and Mr. Ernest Grant, departed once again to South Africa to conduct a “Train-the-Trainer” session on the use of the new Pre-school curriculum. The successful outcome of this trip consisted of the following:

1. The direct hands-on involvement of local, state and provincial officials who were able to establish a stake in successful outcome of this program.
2. Commitment from the Early Childhood Development Institute (ECDI) to adopt the Learn-Not-To-Burn Preschool Curriculum as a core curriculum of study. This curriculum meets or exceeds major parts of the Health Education/Safety standards for pre-school (Grade R). Because of their adoption of this curriculum, this would ensure that message consistency would be provided in public and private daycares.
3. University of South Africa (UNISA) – Dr. Mohamed Seedat, (Director of the National Injury Prevention Program) and his team will conduct a pilot program of the curriculum. He will also oversee the correct translation of this curriculum into three additional languages (Zulu, Sutu, and Africans) to ensure that there is no loss of the message intent or content.



4. Dr. Audrey Gule, Chief –Johannesburg Fire/EMS services. Since her appointment as Chief, Dr. Gule has been a pivotal force in re-shaping the EMS system of Johannesburg. She strongly believes that through teaching people how to avoid safety Hazards would result in fewer life-threatening emergencies. She has pledged her full support of the new curriculum. She will ensure that all fire life/safety service personnel utilize the suggested skills and practices to help reduce the occurrence of fire and burn injuries. Furthermore, Dr. Gule also sees it as the responsibility of South Africa help the other countries of Africa to reduce injuries related to fires and burns. Her goal is to take information learned from their experience and share it with their neighbors.

It can be noted that given the longevity of this project, much has been accomplished to help reduce the number of fires and burns that occurs in South Africa. Yet much more remains to be done. Grant hopes to continue this endeavor by continuing to offer his advice and expertise. Obviously the ultimate goal is to protect the future of South Africa...its children!

