

(Abstract)

Never assume that a public information and education (PI & E) program will be successful. In fact, most PI & E programs do not lead to a measurable reduction in crashes or injuries. Never assume that a PI & E program will do no harm. Some well-meaning educational programs, albeit a very few, actually lead to more crashes and injuries. Moreover, the implementation of a program that does not work will limit the amount of resources available for programs that can make a difference. Too often, PI & E programs have been implemented on the naïve assumption that merely urging people to adopt health-enhancing behaviors for their own good will lead them to do so. We now have substantial research and evaluation evidence to indicate that this approach will fail, although it allows program organizers to think that they are dealing with the problem and to take credit for doing so. Rather, we should implement only those programs that follow the research evidence with regard to unsuccessful versus successful PI & E programs.