Healthy playgrounds: Do it yourself monitoring

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Aim

To develop simple methods for researching and routine monitoring of three aspects of healthy play spaces:

• Drinking water
• Shade
• Smokefree signs
Background

- Playgrounds can be a crucial space for child health because of:
  - Green space and trees
  - Opportunities to play safely outdoors

- Advocates need systematic data so as to inform local and central governments

- While there a number of audit guides for recreation spaces, there is a lack of *simple methods* that health workers and advocates can use
Methods - General

• Lists of playgrounds from:
  – Council websites
  – Phone or visit councils
  – Google Earth survey

• Survey within 10-100m of playground

• Record name and location of playground
Methods: Drinking water

• Photos of:
  – **Context** – from 10m away
  – **Fountains** including taps and dog bowls
  – Of *water flow*
  – Close-up of **nozzle**

• Test taps

• Note issues
Results: Drinking water
Methods: Health related signs

• Photos of all signage within 10 metres of the playground equipment

• Measure the largest signs for each subject matter found (smoking, dogs, alcohol and sun-safety) with a tape measure

• Note issues
Results: Health related signage
Results: Te reo signs
Results: Sign size and quality

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Paddington Grove Play Area

This park is maintained by Wellington City Council
ph 499-4444 or www.Wellington.govt.nz
Methods: Shade

• Visit or locate using Google Street View (where available) and Google Earth

• Estimate the *noon summer shade coverage* (% of area) for:
  - The main-play area
  - Any stand-alone play equipment areas
  - Sitting areas and eating areas within 10 m of the main play area
Methods: Shade

• Classify area as having:
  – Insufficient (Under 20% cover)
  – Partly sufficient (20-50%)
  – Sufficient (Over 50%)

• Classify each source of built shade as:
  – Permanent (e.g. fixed structures) or
  – Temporary (e.g. large umbrellas)
heavy – over 90% UVR protection

Good protection from direct UVR. Protection from indirect UVR will depend on canopy size and where a person is positioned under the canopy. Suitable for long-stay use if personal sun protection measures are also used.

medium – around 60% UVR protection

Filtered shade provides low levels of protection from direct and indirect UVR. Suitable for short-stay use only. Personal sun protection measures should also be used.

light – less than 30% UVR protection

Poor protection from direct and indirect UVR. Suitable for transit shade only.
Methods: Shade

Use a canopy density guide to classify tree canopies as:

- Heavy (over 90% UVR protection)
- Medium (around 60% of UVR protection) or
- Light (less than 30% UVR protection)

For more information see:

Discussion

• Data can help advocates and officials with local government

• Even when there is a smokefree playground law, a need to monitor best practice implementation
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