

Dr. David Bowering is the Chief Medical Officer for Northern Health, which covers 63% of the geography of BC. Dr. Bowering's experience as a GP in a small town Emergency Room generated a passion for road safety and crash prevention. He has been a strong advocate of the health care professionals getting involved in crash prevention, and this year was recognized by the Provincial Health Officer with an Award of Excellence for his work.

### **TREATING ROAD CRASHES AS A PREVENTABLE DISEASE**

David Bowering, MD, MHSc, Chief Medical Health Officer, Northern Health, MaryAnne Arcand, HSW, BA, RoadHealth Coalition

Road crashes are not accidents--they do not happen by chance. Like disease, they follow a pattern. By identifying the risks for crashes, it would be possible to predict and prevent them. From a public health perspective, we attempt to analyze each risk factor in order to understand and predict patterns of crashes and the resulting injuries and deaths. The World Health Organization has recognized road crashes as a global public health issue.

The goal of our project is to understand and apply basic public health principles to identify risk factors, and then develop and choose motor vehicle crash prevention strategies. However, by taking a multi-disciplinary approach and merging the public health model with the internationally recognized strategy of enforcement, engineering and education, we combine the strategies of several road safety and community engagement disciplines to create a more comprehensive prevention strategy. In Northern BC, this multi-disciplinary approach has resulted in an overall downward trend in crashes over the past 4 years