INTRODUCTION
In South Africa there has been growing national concern about the high levels of interpersonal violence especially among young people. Several incidents of school homicides in particular made newspaper headlines during 2006 and a national public hearing on “School Based Violence” was also convened by the Human Rights Commission to address the problem. However, incidents of school-associated violent deaths represent only a small proportion of adolescent homicides. The National Injury Mortality Surveillance System, which captures approximately 40% of the annual nonnatural deaths in South Africa, reveal that the majority (52%) of nonnatural deaths among youth between the age of 15 and 24 years are due to violence. Unpublished NIMSS data for 2004 shows that of the 8575 violent deaths where age was recorded, young people between the ages of 15 to 24 years accounted for more than a quarter (26.3%) of homicides.

OBJECTIVES
Given the high rates of homicide among youth South Africans, prevention is a priority. Despite the concern regarding the high levels of violence among South African youth, relatively little scientific research has been devoted to homicides of adolescents in South Africa.

This study seeks to address this scarcity of literature by:
• providing a detailed description of the who, what, where, when and how of adolescent (age 15-19 years) homicides in Johannesburg from 2001 to 2005;
• identifying the geographical distribution of adolescent homicides across neighbourhoods within Johannesburg.

MATERIALS AND METHOD
The sample of adolescent homicide victims was drawn from the National Injury Mortality Surveillance System (NIMSS) from 2001-2005. By law, all injury deaths in South Africa are subject to medico-legal investigation. The NIMSS collates information that arises from these existing investigative procedures at mortuaries and state forensic chemistry laboratories, as a collaborative effort between different research groups and government bodies in South Africa. The NIMSS form is a one-page document typically completed soon after post-mortem. Demographic variables of the deceased, spatial and temporal details of the injury event, the manner and external cause of death, and the involvement of alcohol are recorded.

RESULTS
There were 304 adolescent homicide victims in Johannesburg from 2001 to 2005.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION
The homicide rate for Johannesburg adolescents is exceedingly high compared to that of other cities worldwide. The findings reveal that prevention strategies must target males, the availability of firearms and alcohol. However, to develop comprehensive prevention strategies further research is required regarding the situational characteristics of adolescent homicide such as the nature of the relationship between the victim and perpetrator as well as the circumstances leading to the homicide event e.g. argument or robbery. Furthermore, the findings also reveal that adolescent homicides are not equally distributed across Johannesburg city. While an effort should be made to target high-risk areas, there is also a need for further research to identify the socio-physical attributes of the various neighbourhoods/areas that may contribute to homicide occurrence.