



# INJURY BULLETIN

QUEENSLAND INJURY  
SURVEILLANCE & PREVENTION  
PROJECT

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## This Month...

As advised in last month's Bulletin, QISPP would like to foster a liaison group amongst injury control professionals. Expressions of interest in forming an injury coalition would be welcome.

*Telephone QISPP on (840 8569) to register your interest.*

This month we cover the following topics:

- **Pedestrian Injuries**
- **Injuries involving Barbecues.**

A new section in this bulletin focuses on **Occupational Injuries** and the first article in this series details injuries to health care workers.

With Summer approaching our **Season Watch** deals with injuries caused by fans.

In addition some interesting facts about the type of objects children swallow or insert into ears or noses are detailed.

## PEDESTRIAN INJURIES

Serious injury and death to pedestrians has been identified as a road problem in Queensland, where children and people over 60 years of age are over represented in fatalities.

Road fatality statistics for Australia, published by the Federal Office of Road Safety have indicated that for the 12 months from January to December 1992, 347 pedestrians died on Australian roads. Seventy-four of these pedestrians died on Queensland roads. Australia-wide the pattern shows the peak age for pedestrian fatalities in the 60+ age group, followed by the 5-9 year age group, with a third group in the 35-39 year age group. The groups most at risk of being in a fatal pedestrian incident are children in their early school years and senior citizens in their retirement years.

There were 784 (63.6%) males and 449 (36.4%) females injured as pedestrians who attended hospitals in the QISPP collection area in Brisbane South between January 1 1988 and 30 June 1992. The annual pedestrian injury rate for the region was 41.3 per 100,000 population.

The age groups most vulnerable to pedestrian rundowns were the five to nine year age group and the 40 to 49 year age group. Of all pedestrian attendances more than half (53.5%) were children or youths aged less than 20 years. Twenty-one percent of victims were aged 40 years and more.

The majority of people (69.5%) were injured on public roadways, followed by driveways (11.4%), parking areas (5.1%) and footpaths (4.9%). One percent occurred in locations of mass transport and involved large vehicles such as trains and buses. The remaining 8% were injured in places such as bikeways, boat ramps, back yards and other non-road areas.

People injured on public roads were almost twice as likely to be admitted to hospital as those injured at non-road sites.

## **INJURIES SUFFERED BY PEDESTRIANS**

At least 40 (4.7%) of pedestrians recorded by QISPP, suffered what could be called catastrophic injuries which have long term sequelae for the victim or resulted in death. These included eight people who suffered traumatic amputations, four with major eye damage, 17 who suffered spinal or brain damage and 11 who died in hospital as a result of their injuries.

Fractures were the most numerous injuries inflicted— three hundred and twenty-nine of the pedestrians injured on public roads received fractures. Sixty three (19%) of these had more than one fracture.

Injuries to the head are all potentially serious. Of the 858 people injured on public roads 388 (45.2%) suffered an injury to the head. Concussion resulted in 42.3% of those pedestrians who suffered a head injury.

The majority of pedestrians (1,002 people or 81.3%) were struck by cars. Eighty people were struck by bicycles (6.5%), 75 people (6.1%) by trucks and vans, 23 or 1.9% by motorbikes and 8 or 0.7% were struck by buses (four at bus stops or stations and four on public roads). Forty five pedestrians (3.6%) were struck by other vehicles such as trains and trailers.

## **INJURIES INVOLVING BARBECUES**

QISPP recorded 212 injuries from barbecues during a five year period ending June 30 this year. Interestingly, only a little over half (58%) of these injuries were burns.

Half of the burn injuries were flame burns; of these, 30 cases involved gas barbecues exploding or flaring back and one in four flame burns resulted from using petrol, methylated spirits or other fuels to light the fire.

Over one third of the burn injuries were contact burns, occurring when people accidentally fell against or touched a hot barbecue plate. Hot fat or oil caused the injury in one in ten cases of barbecue burn injuries.

Just under half the injuries involving barbecues were not thermal injuries; the majority of these were lacerations and fractures, occurring when people dropped barbecue plates on themselves or fell against sharp edges and corners.

# INJURIES TO HEALTH CARE WORKERS

In a 5 year period to 30/6/93, QISPP recorded 1,171 injuries to health care workers who were involved in patient care in an institution such as a hospital, nursing home or welfare hostel.

The occupations included in this report and the percentage of injury presentations for each occupational group were as follows:

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| • Nurses  | 67.3% |
| • Ward Helpers  | 19.0% |
| • Medical practitioners   | 4.0%  |
| • Paramedical and health diagnostic professionals (including radiographers and pharmacists) | 3.7%  |
| • Medical and scientific technicians  | 2.3%  |
| • Therapists (occupational and physical)  | 1.5%  |
| • Aides and other personal service workers  | 0.9%  |
| • Social and welfare workers  | 0.7%  |
| • Other health professionals  | 0.6%  |

The injuries occurred in the following circumstances:

- Nearly one-third of cases were injured when handling or disposing of medical instruments. In this group, over three-quarters of injuries were caused by hypodermic needles or syringes.
- Over one-fifth of injuries were caused by over-exertion, with nearly two-thirds of this group reporting that the injury occurred when lifting.
- Nearly one-fifth of injuries occurred when hitting against, being caught in, or dropping items of furniture or equipment.
- Over one-tenth of injuries occurred when the worker slipped, tripped or fell. The surface

was wet in nearly one-third of these cases.

- About 5% of injuries were caused by contact with chemicals, biological products or foreign bodies.
- In about 4% of cases, staff were injured due to aggressive acts by their patients.

The most frequently recorded injuries were:

- Sprains and strains, particularly to the back
- Punctures and penetrating wounds, particularly to the fingers
- Cuts and lacerations, particularly to hands and fingers

In over 50% of cases, the injury required only minor treatment. 1.5% of cases required admission to hospital.

Some of our participating hospitals treat injuries to hospital workers in staff clinics rather than at the Accident and Emergency Departments. The QISPP database therefore is not representative of the number and range of injuries occurring in health care workers. The report does, however, point to a need for injury prevention strategies to be directed at the safe handling and disposal of hypodermic needles and syringes and the teaching of correct lifting techniques.

## DID YOU KNOW...

Children under the age of ten often present to hospital after swallowing or inserting foreign objects into their nose or ears.

The five most common objects are:

- Coins
- Toys or parts of toys
- Jewellery (excluding watches)
- Bones
- Marbles

Most commonly children swallow foreign bodies, followed by sticking things in the nose or ears. More than three quarters of the children seen are in the under 5 age group.

## SEASON WATCH

### FAN INJURIES

As Summer approaches and the temperature starts to climb the injuries sustained from fans also increase. Our data show that the months of December, January and February account for 61% of all fan injuries.

- Most cases occur in the victim's own home. A dangerous but common scenario was for small children to be lifted or thrown into the ceiling fan blades by adults.
- Other cases reported involved children playing on bunk beds and adults hanging curtains or cleaning in close proximity to portable and ceiling fans.
- Arms, hands and fingers were most commonly injured as well as parts of the face and head.
- Lacerations were the most common injury recorded. The injuries ranged in severity but over 11% of all cases selected required admission or transfer to another hospital

## PRODUCT RECALL NOTICE

**HEINZ:** Recalled baby food after a large piece of glass was found in a jar. Affected food is Egg Custard with the code EX66 2163 HIT in blue on the jar lid. Contact Heinz on 008 037 058.

**REPCO & APOLLO:** Some models sold between September 1992 and September 1993 may require repair due to the structural integrity of the frame. Models include:

### MENS RACING BICYCLES:

#### Repco Superlite 1992/93

All frame sizes.

Colours: Vivid Purple, Neon Red/Yellow/Blue.

#### Apollo Vitesse 1992/93

21", 23" and 25" frame sizes.

Colour: Deep Purple.

#### Apollo Concorde 1992/93

23" frame size

Colour: Metallic Black.

#### Apollo Eclipse 1992/93

All frame sizes.

Colour: Screamin' Yellow.

Contact REPCO, 008 645 992 and Apollo Bicycle Co Pty Ltd, 008 635 097.



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