



# INJURY BULLETIN

QUEENSLAND INJURY  
SURVEILLANCE & PREVENTION  
PROJECT

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## This Month .....

- **Dr. Fred Leditschke** of the Department of Child Health at the Royal Children's Hospital reports on **Lawnmower Injuries** recorded on the QISPP data base and makes recommendations for their prevention.
- We also examine **Playground Equipment** injuries to children in public parks and playgrounds. Local government, schools, child care centres and equipment manufacturers are all aware of the need to provide safe, rewarding and developmentally appropriate play opportunities for children.
- QISPP is now working with a number of health regions who are developing rural injury collections. In this issue is a short report on **Birdsville** - it must have the largest catchment area in the world!

### **WORLD CONSUMER RIGHTS DAY 15TH MARCH 1994 - QUEEN STREET MALL**

In 1985 the United Nations adopted eight guidelines for consumer protection. QISPP will be promoting the right of consumers to be protected against hazardous products and hazardous production processes.

## LAWN MOWER INJURIES

Over a five year period to the end of January 1994, 530 people were treated and 110 (21%) admitted from injuries sustained as a result of the operation of lawnmowers. Ninety-three percent occurred in the operator's own home and a smaller percentage in other private dwellings. Only 13 cases occurred on public roads and footpaths and none of these was severe enough to warrant admission to hospital. The Occupational Health & Safety Regulations require the wearing of eye protection, boots and protective clothing during the operation of lawnmowers. If the same standards of care were adopted in the home, many of these injuries could be avoided.

As might be expected, the lowest incidence of injuries occurred in June-July, with a flush during the December holiday period. The highest number however occurred in March no doubt due to the lawn growth associated with summer rains. The greatest number of injuries occurred when a part of the human body moved into the path of the mower. This accounted for 232 or 45% of the patients seen and resulted in 69 being admitted. The second most common injury was from foreign bodies ejected by the mower; 211 cases (40%), with 16 admitted. In 63 cases the operator lost control of the machine and 11 of these casualties were subsequently admitted. The fourth major group were falls by the victim; in 22 cases 14 were admitted. Most people acknowledged that they were performing garden maintenance at the time,

424 cases with 92 admitted. The majority of patients were treated and allowed to go home or reviewed periodically in the Emergency Department. Five hundred and one of the 530 patients treated acknowledged that no safety device was being used, and only in 13 cases were safety glasses being worn and work boots in seven cases. It is acknowledged that much of the data may not be complete but these figures highlight the lack of safety precautions exercised by the average homeowner in the care of his "castle's" lawn. One hundred and nine cuts and lacerations were sustained to the fingers and hands, frequently when the chute clogged with grass and attempts were made to clear it. Manufacturers should look at measures which would reliably prevent blades turning when the users are not in the operating position and the provision of "dead man" type controls based upon a reliable mechanism should be explored. They would need to be comfortable for prolonged periods but not prone to inadvertent operation.

Eye injuries were frequently encountered with 40 abrasions to the eye, one of which required admission and 55 foreign bodies in the eye, two of which required admission. Fortunately in the series there were no deaths from ejected foreign bodies causing head injuries as has been recorded in the literature. Cuts and lacerations to the lower limb (74 cases) and fractures to the toes in 17 cases highlight the need for protective footwear.

Gone are the days of the old hand mower (four cases) and in its place has come the powered lawnmower, in 436 cases with 75 admitted, and less frequently the ride-on mower, 51 cases with 19 requiring admission.

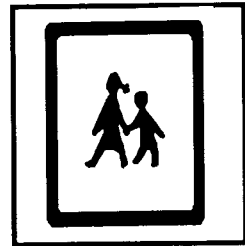
It is comforting to find that there were only 23 children under the age of 14 injured, but 12 of these required admission. In 1984 - 88, seven children were identified who had been admitted to the Mater Children's Hospital who sustained lawnmower injuries, whilst a review of lawnmower contact burns 1982 - 88 at the Royal Children's Hospital revealed nine cases, only one of whom required grafting. In this five year series there were only 20 burns reported, six of whom required admission.

The QISPP data gives no indication as to the age of the mower, nor of the level of maintenance. The popularity of the rotary lawnmower and the necessity to use it for keeping the grass mown brings with it its own trail of injuries and resultant disabilities.

The exact frequency of lawnmower injuries as a percentage of the QISPP data base would provide an interesting comparison with the United Kingdom, where lawnmower injuries only constitute 0.35% of the home accidents surveillance system injuries. The popularity and increased usage of the rotary lawnmower must continue to be paralleled by the design of lawnmowers featuring ergonomic and anthropometric measures based on injury surveillance data to improve their safety.

**ASSOC. PROFESSOR FRED LEDITSCHKE PAEDIATRIC SURGEON,  
ROYAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL,  
BRISBANE.**

## **PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT INJURIES IN PUBLIC PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS**



- QISPP examined a subset of 3 to 13 year old children sustaining injuries on playground equipment in public parks and playgrounds. 771 such injuries were reported to QISPP during the six year period 1/1/88 - 31/12/93.
- Of these 61% occurred in the 5 to 9 year age group. The injuries had an admission rate of 19%, which is similar to that of the average admission rate of 16% for this age group on the QISPP database.
- Fractures were the most common injury type, (50%) with 40% of these 771 children suffering a fracture to the elbow, forearm or wrist. Forty-two percent of the children sustained a fracture required admission to hospital.
- Injuries to the shoulder, collar bone, arm, wrist, hand or finger accounted for 58% of injuries to children occurring on playground equipment in public parks and playgrounds.
- Head injuries which are potentially the most serious, accounted for 17% or one in six cases.

The admission rate for head injuries was 14%.

- The most commonly implicated playground equipment was monkey bars or other playground climbing apparatus, such as forts. This sort of equipment figured in 39% of cases.
- Slippery slides were the next most commonly implicated item (22%), followed by swings (21%).

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## **INJURIES TO HOSPITAL WORKERS CAUSED BY AGGRESSIVE PATIENTS**

During the six years from 1/1/88 to 31/12/93, QISPP recorded 48 cases of injury to hospital employees caused by patients.

In 32 cases, the hospital worker was injured by being hit, punched or pushed over. In three cases, the patient used an object to inflict injury, including a fork and a walking stick. Seven employees were bitten, six were kicked and three were scratched.

The injuries resulted mainly in soft tissue damage such as cuts and lacerations, abrasions, bruising and swelling. However, more serious injuries such as fractures of the nose and facial bone occurred in two cases and concussion in another two cases. Nine of the hospital workers required follow-up treatment, while two were admitted.

The hospital workers injured included 31 nurses, eight ward helpers, seven security officers and two ambulance officers.

## **DID YOU KNOW?**



With QISPP now expanding its database to include rural areas, the Birdsville Hospital in the Central Western Health Region is now contributing to our collection.

Birdsville is located in far western Queensland, close to the South Australian border. The Birdsville Hospital opened in 1923 and has been operated since then by the Uniting Church Frontier Services. The hospital provides a service to approximately 250 people in the shire covering a 200 km radius (1,000,000 square kilometres!) which extends into South Australia. In addition the hospital services the annual influx of 6000 visitors for the world famous Birdsville races which are held on the first weekend of September.

The area is staffed by three Registered Nurses, two at the Birdsville Hospital and one at the Bedourie Outpatient Clinic. These nurses provide acute emergency treatment, health education, community health services, outpatient clinics and basic radiography as well as many other medical services. At the time of the Birdsville Races, three staff members from the Wesley Hospital in Brisbane make the journey to provide back-up assistance if required.

Jane Tegeler R.N. said the types of injuries they see range from motor vehicle accidents (quite often vehicle roll-overs) and cattle mustering accidents (falls from horses, encounters with aggressive livestock), to the general knocks and scrapes of daily life in the outback. Medical back up is provided by the Royal Flying Doctor Service based at Charleville.

QISPP looks forward to receiving more data from this area of Australia and a continuing relationship with the Birdsville Hospital.

# SEASON WATCH

## OUTDOOR CRICKET

QISPP has recorded 382 injuries over a five year period associated with outdoor cricket during the summer months .

Locations varied, but the greatest number of injuries occurred on local sporting fields, followed by school ovals and residential areas. Not surprisingly the injuries peaked on weekends.

Fractures were the most common injury, accounting for 6% of all injuries. Other frequently sustained injuries included sprains, strains and bruising.

The body parts sustaining the greatest number of injuries (29%) were the fingers and hands. Facial injuries ranked next and ranged from lacerations and bruising to fractured noses.

The injuries ranged in severity, with 5% needing admission or transfer to another hospital and 45% of cases requiring further or follow up treatment.

The most common mechanism of injury was being hit by the cricket ball itself.

## PRODUCT RECALL NOTICES

**SEELEY INTERNATIONAL:** Recalling the Convair Cooler Heater model M800CH as it has been identified that under extreme test conditions that when the unit is used as a cooler, a micro switch may overheat, giving rise to the possible risk of fire. Units identified as model number M800CH AUS, the product number 008516 and a serial number in the range between 08 077 497 and 08 089 497. The date of manufacture is between September 16, 1993 and November 15, 1993. Contact (08) 276 2934.

**VOCA COMMUNICATIONS PTY LTD:** Cordless telephone Model CT 2500 AUS serial numbers 30800001 - 3081000 and 3090001 - 3092000. Possible insufficient isolation between the telephone line circuit and the battery charging contacts which may result in electric shock during storms etc.

**SEELEY:** Portable cooler/heater model convair classic cooler heater M800CH AUS recalled due to possibility of fire if unit is used as cooler under extreme conditions. The Convair Cooler Heater can be identified by a grey badge stating "Cooler/Heater" a sliding control switch marked "Heat" and a circular grille on the middle of the front panel. Contact (08) 276 2934.

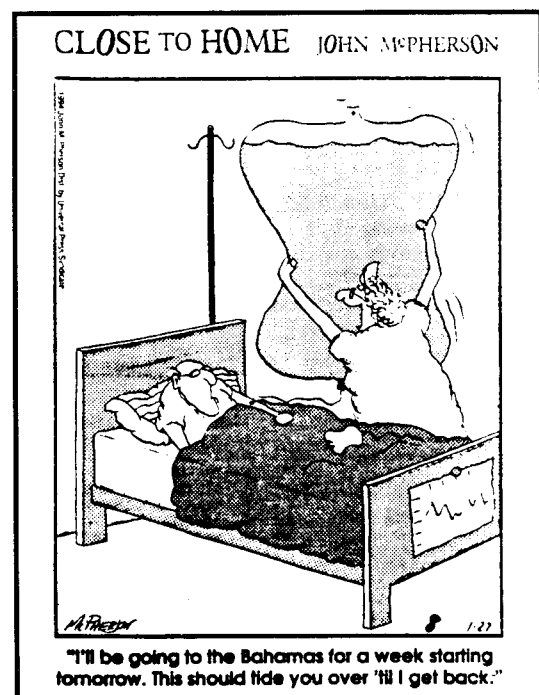
**WOOLWORTHS LTD:** Saucepan set - 3 piece stainless steel. Handle may separate from the body of the saucepan at the spot weld point of attachment. Contact Brian Malone (02) 498 0441.

**EVEREADY AUSTRALIA PTY LIMITED:** Eveready "Dolphin" lantern with eveready black super heavy duty battery No. 1209. The lantern is marked "Union carbide" made in Hong Kong. The 6V "Eveready battery is made in Australia. Lantern may explode when switched on.

**INTEX CORPORATION:** Due to warning labels only been placed on the packaging and not on the actual product the following inflatable vinyl rings have been recalled:  
58240 Sun Brite Super Tough Swim Ring (Toys R Us)  
58261 Sun Brite Super Tough Tyre Tube (Big W)  
59260 Good ol Tyre Tube (Big W)

## SAFETY NOTICE NOT RECALL:

**GRO-YEARS:** Owners of the Bjorn C40 cot made between 1990 and 1992 should be aware of the possibility of the teething rail cracking and injuring the child. Serial numbers of the affected models are 17400 to 33125. Contact (045) 77 2361.



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