



# INJURY BULLETIN

QUEENSLAND INJURY  
SURVEILLANCE & PREVENTION  
PROJECT

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## This Month. . . .

Welcome to our 30th Edition of the Injury Bulletin. In this edition of the Injury Bulletin we examine the following topics:

- **Injuries to Ambulance Officers**
- **Injuries in Nursing Homes**
- **Boating Related Injuries**
- **Snake & Spider Bites**



To Ernie's horror, and the ultimate disaster of all, one more elephant tried to squeeze on

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## INJURIES TO AMBULANCE OFFICERS



QISPP recorded 104 injury presentations by on-duty ambulance officers over a 6 year period to the end of 1993.

89 (86%) were male officers.

Injuries tended to be minor with just one officer requiring admission to hospital. In one third of cases the injury was a strain (particularly to the back and neck) which occurred when lifting a patient.

Slips, trips or falls accounted for 18 (17%) of these injuries with 7 of these being falls on stairs.

14 ambulance officers were involved in transport accidents, 10 of whom were injured while driving or as passenger in the ambulance. The remainder were injured on their way to work while driving or riding a motorcycle or push-bike.

Violence against ambulance officers by patients occurred in four cases while two officers were contaminated by body fluids. **Q**

# INJURIES IN NURSING HOMES

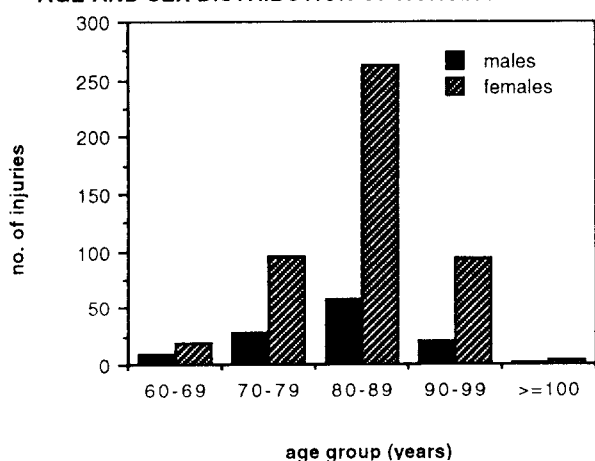


In a 1993 report prepared by the Department of Public Health, University of Sydney entitled "Goals and Targets For Australia's Health in the Year 2000 and Beyond", a stated aim was to reduce the mortality and morbidity from injuries occurring in a residential setting. People aged 65 years or more are targeted to reduce the mortality from falls, and people aged 75 and over to reduce the proportion admitted to hospital as a result of fractured hips.

This article examines injuries to patients aged 60 or over occurring in nursing homes.

On the QISPP database over a six year period from 1/1/88 to 31/12/93, there were 593 injuries recorded to persons aged 60 years or over in nursing homes. Figure 1 shows the age and sex distribution of these injury cases.

AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION OF NURSING HOME INJURIES



The high proportion of women in the older age groups in the Australian population is well documented (the ratio of women to men in the 80+ age group is 2 to 1). In 1992, about three-quarters of residents in hostels and nursing homes were women. (Steinberg, M. *Towards a Research Agenda for the Wellbeing of Older Women*, 1994).

Of the 593 injuries, 502 cases (nearly 85%) reported the injury was due to a slip, trip, or fall. Factors which may have contributed to the fall, such as physical and medical condition and/or medications, are very often not documented. Commonly, falls occurred;

- when getting into or out of bed (10% of cases)
- from chairs and wheelchairs (6% of cases)
- from toilets, commodes and shower chairs (4% of cases)
- after tripping over objects on the floor (3% of cases)
- on stairs (2% of cases)
- while using walking aids (2% of cases)
- after slipping on wet or polished surfaces (2% of cases)

In nearly 60% of presentations, the injury sustained was a fracture or dislocation, while 23% of cases recorded cuts and lacerations, and 15% had bruising.

Injuries to the lower limb were recorded in over half the cases, twice as frequently as injuries to the upper limb. The body part most often injured was the hip, with over a third of presentations reporting a fractured hip or femur. Abrasions and lacerations to the face accounted for 17% of injuries, while fractures of the upper arm and elbow accounted for 7% of cases.

Reflecting the nature of the injuries and the age of the nursing home population, the admission rate was significantly high with 53% requiring hospital in-patient treatment. **Q**

# BOATING RELATED INJURIES



Boating related injuries recorded by QISPP in the 5 years from 1/1/88 to 31/12/93 totalled 515. Boats involved were reported as being ferries, power boats, sailboats, surfboats, motorskis & jetskis, rubber boats & dinghies, canoes, catamarans and yachts.

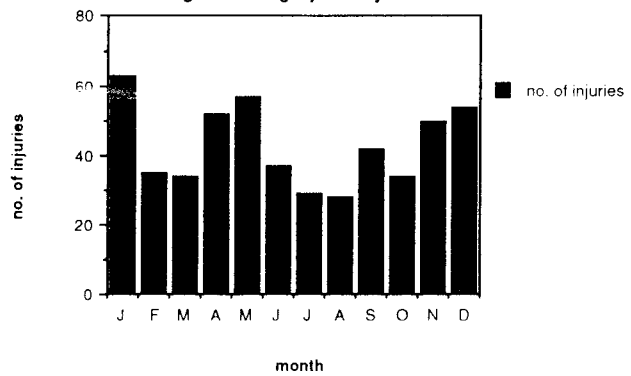
People were injured both in and out of the water, during boat maintenance, manoeuvring or just 'messing about'.

Three quarters of the injuries occurred on or near the ocean or estuaries. The most common injuries were fractures (25%), cuts and lacerations (25%), and 2% of cases sustained concussion. Of the 129 recorded fractures, one fifth were of the arm or wrist, 23 of the ribs and 20 of the legs or ankles. 10% of all injuries sustained were to the chest and ribs, with 23 people sustaining fractured ribs and 4% were to the back.

Considering the combination of environmental characteristics on boats (movement, wet surfaces) it is not surprising that 40% of injuries were the result of falls. Of the 78 boating-related injuries in 1993, 25 were falls in which the injury occurred when the individual slipped or tripped. A further 11 injuries were the result of falling from or being thrown out of boats or off jetskis. Seven people were injured when struck by booms, masts or rigging on sailing boats. Other injuries involved winches, boat trailers, belts & pulleys, fly wheels, propellers, scuba gear, oars and ladders.

The distribution of injuries across the year (see Fig. 1) indicates a possible relationship to holiday times and the warmer weather. The indications are that the next two months will be busy ones for injuries on the water.

Fig. 1 Boating Injuries by Month



# SNAKE AND SPIDER BITES



- QISPP recorded 1,216 cases of snake or spider bites presenting at Brisbane South Hospitals in the six years ending 31/12/93. Two thirds of cases occurred in the months October through to March.

- More than a quarter of these cases were in the < 10 years age group.

- 20% of these people required admission to hospital for their injury (the average admission rate for injury is 12%).

- By far the majority (70%) of injuries occurred in residential areas. One third of bites occurred inside the home, and the remaining two thirds occurred in the garden, garage or yard. 10% of people were 'on the job' when they were bitten.

- In 1993, 237 people presented to Brisbane South hospitals with snake or spider bites.

- 82% of these people were bitten by spiders. Of these, 20% identified the spider as a redback. Less than half the number of redback spider bites presenting to hospital (45%) required short-stay observation or admission to hospital.

- 50% of snake bites required admission or short-stay observation. **Q**

## **FIRST NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON INJURY PREVENTION & CONTROL 27-28 FEBRUARY 1995**

*The First National Conference on Injury Prevention and Control will be held in Sydney at the Hotel Nikko, Darling Harbour on 27 and 28 February 1995. The conference will be the first component of the First National Injury Prevention and Control Forum and is being held as part of the lead up to the Third International Conference on Injury Prevention and Control to be held in Melbourne in February 1996. The Conference will be sponsored by the Commonwealth Department of Human Services and Health.*

*The areas that will be covered in the conference include: transport-related injury, work-related injury, fall injury, sport and recreation-related injury, intentional injury (interpersonal violence), consumer safety, burns and scald injury and water safety. In addition, topics of general interest will be discussed including data collection and alcohol and injury.*

### **The aims of the Conference are;**

- *to promote sectorial linkages;*
- *to address the barriers to injury prevention and control;*
- *to promote injury prevention and control to decision makers and the wider community;*
- *to assist the implementation of National/ State/Territory Injury Prevention and Control Strategies.*
- *to identify and promote best practice: and,*
- *to provide a platform for injury research and practice which addresses cutting edge issues.*

*The registration fee for the two day Conference is \$195.*

*To obtain a conference program and registration form please write to*  
**Expert Conferences**  
**PO Box 150**  
**LYNEHAM ACT 2602**  
**Fax: (06) 257 4038**

## **PRODUCT RECALL NOTICES**

Some of the numerous recalled products over the last few months include:

### **ELECTRICAL:**

**ELNA** - Lotus Press purchased prior to 1 August 1994 are recalled. Contact 008 025 391

**KAMBROOK** - Slimline Double Adaptor Model DA1/R since August 1993. Contact 008 805 614.

**KAMBROOK** - Personal Heater and Fan Model TH 10. Contact 008 805 614

**OMEGA** - Heater Model "T5 Turbo" from Target Stores. Contact R. McKee (02) 666 3100

### **BABY PRODUCTS**

**COPPERART** - Wooden Toy Train. Contact (02) 675 1133.

**GERRY** - Splash Seat Model 455 (only ones with white suction cups). Contact R. Armstrong Pty Ltd, 32 Tibrockney Street, Highett, Victoria.

**NALLY LTD** - Nally Baby Bouncer. All units purchased from 1 January 1992. Contact (02) 820 2222.

**TREE TOYS PTY LTD** - Child's wooden toy rattle known as Knocker Man. Tel: (02) 899 6133.

**VOLANDU** - Baby stroller sold at Clints Crazy Bargains. Contact (02) 830 6777.