



INJURY BULLETIN

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With winter '92 fast approaching we pulled out some injury figures on the wintry topics of vaporisers, commonly used to treat children suffering from upper respiratory tract infections and moth repellent products.

In addition we have taken a look at nail gun injuries which are a relatively new, albeit increasing, phenomenon.

VAPORISER INJURIES

QISPP recorded 50 injuries to people involving vaporisers and humidifiers in the four year period 1/1/88 to 31/12/91. 90% of these were in children under 15 years. All of the injuries occurred in or around a home. Half of the injuries occurred in only three months of the year: May, June and July.

Almost two thirds of the injuries were ingestions of substances added to the vaporiser, such as eucalyptus oil, Vicks Vaporub, Kaz vaporiser liquid, Mentholaire vaporiser liquid or methyl salicylate.

Dr Rob Pitt, Director of Accident & Emergency at Mater Children's Hospital, cites eucalyptus oil as the sixth most common agent involved in medication poisonings requiring admission. Over one third of the injuries were burns - all burns except two were scalds from spills of the hot liquid. The remaining two were a burn resulting from dry contact with the hot equipment and a scald resulting from close contact with the steam being emitted from the equipment.

Two children rubbed vaporiser additives in their eyes.

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* QISU data is based on emergency department presentations to the following hospitals: Mater Children's Hospital, Mater Adult Hospital, Mater Private Emergency Care Centre, Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Hospital, Redland Hospital, Logan Hospital, Royal Children's Hospital, Mt Isa Hospital and Mackay and district hospitals.



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A quarter of the injuries occurred when a bowl or jug of hot water was knocked over or spilt. In one case the bowl containing the hot water cracked. In four of these cases a towel was being used which was accidentally, causing the bowl to tip. Three out of four of the burn injuries involved home-devised vaporisers; the remaining burns involved commercial humidifying or vaporising equipment. However one in two of the ingestion injuries involved the commercial vaporising equipment, where the child drank the liquid from the machine.

Dr Brent Masters, respiratory physician attached to Mater Children's Hospital, said that studies have shown vaporisers to be of no use in croup, and that he did not recommend them in the treatment of colds and other acute upper respiratory tract conditions as their use was questionable.

INJURIES INVOLVING MOTH REPELLENT PRODUCTS

QISPP recorded 37 children under the age of 15 years as ingesting moth repellent products in the four year period 1/1/88 to 31/12/91. The incidence of these poisoning injuries appeared to remain high throughout most months of the year, dropping only in the summer months November, December, February and in the winter month of August. The highest incidence was in September, a time when people are packing away their woollen clothing. Four of the cases ingested naphthalene flakes, 7 ingested camphor blocks, and 26 ingested mothballs.

NAIL GUN INJURIES

QISPP has recorded 218 nail gun injuries from January 1988 to date. Three children under 5 were injured in this manner. Young male carpenters appeared to be the group most at risk, naturally enough. All cases except two involved males and about two thirds of the cases were under 30 years of age.

Two thirds of those injured were tradespersons, with most (80%) of these being carpenters & joiners.

60% of the injuries occurred on construction sites; 90% of victims reported being on the job when they were injured. One in ten nail gun injuries occurred in or around the home, while one fifth of the victims were engaging in 'do-it-yourself' or other maintenance activities.

Injuries involving nail guns tended to be serious, with 20% of these injuries requiring admission to hospital compared with the average injury admission rate of around 10%. 2 injuries from nail guns involved the abdomen. 4% were injuries to the eye and 8% of injuries were fractures to the fingers, hands, toes & feet.

Almost half of these injuries were seen at the QEII hospital, which is convenient to the industrial suburbs of Archerfield, Rocklea, Acacia Ridge and Slacks Creek.