



Q I S P P

QUEENSLAND INJURY
SURVEILLANCE & PREVENTION PROJECT

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SAFETY BULLETIN

Mater Adults' Hospital Mater Children's Hospital Mater Priority Emergency Centre Redlands Hospital
Logan Community Hospital Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Hospital Princess Alexandra Hospital

Due to the interest the bulletin has generated and the ever-increasing injury statistics recorded by QISPP, the Safety Bulletin will now be produced monthly. We hope this increased production will be welcomed favourably by readers and if there are any other changes or ideas which you feel would improve the publication, please advise us by either letter, phone call or fax. The injury topics which will be covered this month are:-

- **Falls from roofs**
- **Ingestions of pesticides**
- **Some facts on child abuse**

Following our article in last month's bulletin regarding injuries resulting from high chairs, the Department of Consumer Affairs is currently in the process of examining ways of reducing these injuries and will give details of the type of information they are requiring from the public. This month the product recall notices issued by the Department cover various areas from gas heaters to smoked trout.

Falls from roofs while 'on the job'

While women have certainly become more diversified in their fields of work, the QISPP database reveals that none have presented to Accident and Emergency Departments at our seven participating hospitals on the Brisbane Southside with any type of work injury involving roofs. These statistics apply to the five and a half year period of QISPP operations (1/1/88 - 30/6/93).

During this time QISPP has recorded 97 injured males. Within this group of males almost 40% were aged from 20 to 29 years.

Almost three quarters of the injuries involved falling at least one metre from the roof with the majority (71%) hitting the ground and the remainder falling on such objects as bricks, barbecues, drainpipes etc.

Just under one fifth of the injuries were the direct result of the collapse or cave-in of the roof.

The three trades appearing most often with these injuries were:-

- *Roof slating and tiling*
- *Carpentering*
- *Plumbing*

Given the height of most roofs, it is not surprising that the admission rate of injuries is double that of the average QISPP admission rate. Over one quarter of the injuries presenting proved to be fractures, with fractures to the spine being the most common injury. Just under one quarter of the presentations were lacerations to the body. The next most common injuries following fractures and lacerations were sprained ankles.

Ingestion of pesticides

We examined the data on the accidental and intentional ingestion of pesticides. The most vulnerable were children under the age of 5; our data show that over three quarters of all injuries occurred in this age group. The data also reveal that the admission rate into hospital is over double the QISPP average admission rate, with 28% of all cases requiring admission and a further 7% requiring transfer to a larger centre.

Of the 187 cases recorded by QISPP in the past five and a half year period (1/1/88 - 30/6/93), rat poison appears to be either a very common household pesticide or perhaps the means by which it is administered renders it a more vulnerable pesticide (e.g. left open for rodents); 84% of all injuries recorded involved ingestion of rat poison. Fourteen per cent of all cases of poisoning were intentional ingestions. Almost 90% of the injuries occurred in the victim's own home.

The pesticides most commonly involved in these ingestions were:-

- lawn grub killer
- insecticide
- pesticide spray
- surface insect spray
- herbicide
- weedkiller
- cockroach baits
- snail/slug baits
- DDT
- fly spray liquid
- pyrethrum spray
- personal insect repellent
- fumigant insecticide
- flea powder/wash/dip
- tomato/azalea dust
- head lice shampoo
- mothballs

The three most common scenarios were:

- * *children finding and ingesting pellets of rat poison*
- * *accidental ingestion of pesticide from bottles or drums when thirsty*
- * *intended self harm by ingestion of rat poison alone or with other substances*

CAPFA (Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Australia) has provided several safety precautions which may be taken to help prevent ingestions of toxic substances:-

- NEVER transfer poisonous products from their original containers into everyday containers e.g. Coke or lemonade bottles
- All chemicals, fertilisers, inflammable liquids, poisons, car wash/polish, petrol and oil should be locked away in a safe place (e.g. cupboard or wooden locker with padlock). Be sure the shed/garage is locked while children play outside.
- Remember to store soap powders, bleaches and other inside chemicals in a cupboard with a child resistant lock.

- Have the Poisons Information Number by the phone. It provides 24hr, 7 days a week service with a 008 number outside of the Metropolitan area.

Did you Know

- Non-accidental injury in children emerged as a serious issue in the late 1960's; however it was not until the 1980's that data was collected on accidental and non-accidental injury in children.
- For every five children who present at hospital with injuries as a result of a car accident, three present with injuries as a result of confirmed (not suspected) child abuse.
- Almost half of confirmed cases of child abuse involve children under 4 years of age.
- More than one third of these children have more than injury.
- In the last 3 months Brisbane's Courier Mail has reported, on average, two child abuse cases per month which have resulted in death.

Rural Video

QISPP is making available for distribution a video entitled "Putting Safety First on the Farm". It is a 15 minute film produced by Country Safe which deals with injury prevention in agriculture. The film is detailed, pertinent and interesting, and should be viewed by everyone who has an interest in injury prevention.

Some of the topics dealt with in the film are:

tractor safety, seeding, hay cutting, hay baling, electricity, harvesting, gun safety, stock handling, chemicals and safety when working with tyres, windmills and chainsaws.

Copies of the film can be purchased from QISPP at a cost of \$30.00 plus postage (\$2.80). Please contact Cheryl Graham at QISPP on (07) 840 8569 if you are interested in incorporating this video in your health promotion activities.

Department of Consumer Affairs update...

The Department of Consumer Affairs is currently in the process of examining ways of reducing child injuries through falls from highchairs. Most falls occur when children are unrestrained and unsupervised. There are at present no Australian Standards to cover high chairs or high chair restraints; a variety of products are therefore available on the Australian market, some of which some may not meet basic safety requirements.

Some of the issues that the Department intends to examine are:

- The range and seriousness of injuries resulting from falls from high chairs.
- An assessment of the effectiveness of available highchair restraints and harnesses.
- An examination of the types of high chairs that are currently available on the Australian market as well as those currently being used by parents/care givers. This examination will include highchairs that are used in commercial premises and institutions.

- An assessment of overseas standards regarding the manufacture of high chairs.

In the next few weeks the Department will be consulting with retailers, manufacturers, government agencies, consumer groups, and child safety agencies to gain a community perspective on these issues, in order to establish the extent of the problem and to develop a comprehensive strategy to reduce injuries associated with the use of highchairs.

Further information on this important project can be obtained from Mr D. Strachan by phoning (07) 239 3588.

Product Recall Notices

Drug

Periactin Syrup: (Cyproheptadine HCl, MSD) Syrup, in 100ml. bottles, all batches. Reason - this product is being recalled as a precautionary measure. Testing has shown a problem with the stability of the active ingredient in some bottles from some batches, which means that the desired effect may be diminished. You should return all bottles of PERIACTIN Syrup to your pharmacist who will give you a full refund.

Merck Sharp & Dohme (Australia) Pty. Ltd.
54-68 Ferndell Street
South Granville NSW 2141
(02) 795 9500

Electrical

Bonaire Pyrox: Bonaire "Elite" Gas Space Heaters manufactured to the 25 May 1993. If not operated in accordance with published instructions control knob can be jammed

down in the "ignition" position. In this position the gas valve can be mechanically held open and gas is able to flow uninterrupted to the pilot and one of the main burners.

Mr Max Buckerfield
Product Development Manager
Bonaire Pyrox
26 Nylex Avenue
Salisbury. SA.

Blackwell IXL: Haan series heaters fitted with Torin Fan heater assemblies incorporating BRG type A-02 auto resetting cut-out and 121deg C Microtemp device covered under File No. V900400. On some units screws of incorrect length were used which could result in the device being short circuited, thus by-passing safety devices.

Food

Aquatas Cold Smoked Salmon and Trout: produced in July 1993 may contain low levels of the bacteria *listeria monocytogenes*. Bacteria is not harmful to healthy adults, however may cause illness in pregnant women, the elderly, babies and people with low immunity.
Phone (002) 679 400.

Bloom's Health Foods: recalled Bloom's Valerian Root Herbal Tea 75g as animal excreta has been detected in one batch.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY WARNING - NOT RECALL: Heating Systems Pty. Ltd. Heatwave - Tech Mirage - Nightmoods - Tranquility Brand Waterbed Heaters. Under a combination of circumstances it may malfunction. Purchases between July '91 and September '92, serial numbers between 010791 and 060892.