

National study -- kids' bike injuries are major public health concern

A new study conducted by researchers at the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital concludes that bicycle-related injuries among children and adolescents in the U.S. may be a more significant public health concern than previously estimated. The study, published in the October issue of Injury Prevention, estimates that bicycle-related injuries among children and adolescents result in nearly \$200 million in hospital inpatient charges annually.

Children and adolescents aged 20 years and younger comprise more than half of the estimated 85 million bicycle riders in the U.S. It has been long-known that bicycle-related injuries result in more emergency department visits for children than any other recreational sport. However, this study looks beyond emergency department visits to examine hospitalizations, and estimates that approximately 10,700 children are hospitalized annually for a bicycle-related injury in the U.S. with an average length of stay of three days.

“Bicycles are associated with more childhood injuries than any other consumer product except the automobile,” said Gary Smith, MD, DrPH, director of the Center for Injury Research and Policy, faculty member at The Ohio State University College of Medicine, and one of the study authors. “The high rate of hospitalization and use of healthcare resources identified in our study supports the need for increased attention to bicycle-related injuries.”

This study is the first of its kind to analyze patient and injury characteristics associated with bicycling injuries utilizing a nationally representative sample. Among the significant findings: motor vehicles were involved in approximately 30% of bicycle-related hospitalizations, and the association with motor vehicles increased among older children.

Moreover, one-third of children hospitalized for a bicycle-related injury were diagnosed with traumatic brain injury, a statistic that is significant for its correlation to the number of injuries that may be preventable through the use of bicycle helmets. “The findings from our study can be used to promote targeted prevention strategies to lessen the severity of injury and the number of deaths resulting from pediatric bicycle-related injuries,” Smith said. “We know that bicycle helmets can reduce the risk of brain injury by up to 85%. We need to increase efforts to promote helmet use by children riding bicycles.”

Source: Nationwide Children's Hospital

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