ATV injuries high among young children

Results of a recent Canadian Paediatric Surveillance Program (CPSP) one-time survey indicate that thirty percent of paediatric ATV-related injuries and deaths involve children under the age of 10.

The survey was led by Dr. Peter Gill and Dr. Thomas McLaughlin, the first ever recipients of the 2016 CPSP one-time research grant, and residents at the Hospital for Sick Children.

“ATV legislation and safety is a major priority of the SickKids Paediatric Resident Advocacy Committee, said Dr. Gill, and the CPSP survey was an opportunity to collect data on an important injury prevention issue.

“We see ATV injuries in the hospital, so it’s an issue that resonates with residents,” said Dr. Gill.

Canadian physician knowledge of ATV legislation and safety had never previously been studied. As well, studies measuring ATV-related injury and death have either been limited to data from major centres or have combined data for both dirt bike and ATV incidents involving children and youth.

The aim of their survey was to obtain current data to help determine the national burden of serious injury and death caused by ATV use in children and youth.

“Our results confirm that ATV safety is a high priority advocacy issue,” said Dr. Gill.

The survey, completed by more than 900 paediatricians, measured physician awareness of ATV-related legislation and health promotion practices, and asked respondents to describe their clinical experiences with ATV-related serious injury and death.

Results show that physicians have broad knowledge about ATV-related legislation and safety practices, but may lack a nuanced understanding of the rules and regulations.

For example, only half of physician respondents stated they had discussed ATV safety in patient visits, despite awareness that children under the age of 16 should not operate an ATV. Even paediatricians practicing in rural areas where ATV use is prevalent did not routinely discuss ATV safety.

The survey also revealed that the burden of ATV-injury and death remains significant. Physicians indicated 181 reported cases of serious and/or fatal ATV-related injuries, including 6 deaths. Unfortunately, certain barriers exist that preclude capturing completely accurate numbers within Canada, and this survey was designed to capture signals as opposed to incidence rates.

“Once our results showed that only three-quarters of physicians would refer child/youth deaths to the coroner,” said Dr. Gill. “There are also issues with case reporting, data collection and classification that complicate our understanding of high priority injury prevention targets.”

One of the survey’s important findings, consistent with previous literature, was the age at which injuries and deaths occur; some as young as 4 years old. And in over 50 percent of serious injuries or deaths, the child or youth was the driver.

Dr. Gill and Dr. McLaughlin hope their results will be help fill the data gap for this injury prevention issue.

“A one-time survey has limitations, but it helps to identify the major issues that will propel this advocacy initiative forward,” said Dr. Gill. “Further research and consolidation of existing data will inform these efforts.”

Dr. Gill and Dr. McLaughlin will deliver a presentation at the upcoming CPS Annual Conference and are preparing CPSP Highlights article on survey findings. Results will also be included in the 2017 edition of CPSP Results.

For more information on this survey and the one-time resident research grant, visit www.cpsp.cps.ca. Survey co-authors include Dr. Daniel Rosenfeld, Dr. Charlotte Moore-Hepburn, Dr. Natalie Yanchar, and Dr. Suzanne Beno.