MEDIA RELEASE

Study shows skateboard use can result in serious brain injury

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Skateboarding injuries account for nearly 1,000 Emergency Department presentations in Queensland each year with severe head injuries making up five per cent of these, according to an article in the latest issue of the *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Surgery* (ANZJS), RACS’ peer-review publication.

Research conducted by Neurosurgeon Dr Norman Ma of Lady Ciento Children’s Hospital in Brisbane, across four major Brisbane hospitals indicated that uncommon but serious brain injury accompanies skateboard use.

The five year study which examined paediatric admissions (those aged 18 years or less), for injuries to the brain and/or spine, identified 51 skateboard related injuries, of which 94 per cent were male. Although a large proportion of admissions fell within the minor or moderate range of severity, 29.5 per cent were serious and severe. These included skull base and skull vault fractures, haematoma requiring surgery and paralysis. Non-neurological injuries included abrasions, lacerations, fractures of the limbs, facial fractures and abdominal injuries.

The study examined how many of these injuries were sustained by falls versus by collision with a motor vehicle and concluded that 23 per cent of skateboard related injuries occurred on areas shared with vehicles.

“Skateboarding in the street adds risk because of the proximity to motor vehicles, the higher speeds which can be achieved, especially on declines, and the irregularities on the surface that cause instability,” Dr Ma said.

The study also investigates the use of helmets and the provision of safe locations such as skate parks to prevent skateboarding on roads.

“In Queensland, although helmets are compulsory for cyclists, skateboarders are considered to be ‘pedestrians’ therefore helmet use is discretionary,” Dr Ma said.

Dr Ma reports that some skateboarders avoid protective clothing for fear of being regarded as inexperienced by other skaters and helmet use has been observed to reduce with increasing age. As a result there have been significant increases in both the incidences and severity of traumatic brain injury with the increasing age of the skater.

The study concludes that there is a risk of severe and permanent brain injuries from skateboarding, which are largely preventable and there are opportunities to improve community preventative measures, but legislation may need to be considered.

[Read the full article here](#)

*The ANZ Journal of Surgery, published by Wiley-Blackwell, is the pre-eminent surgical journal published in Australia, New Zealand and the South-East Asian region for the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. The Journal is dedicated to the promotion of outstanding surgical practice, and research of contemporary and international interest.*

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