

Once bitten twice shy?

7 May 2018

More females than males are bitten by cats and more males than females are bitten by dogs according to a review conducted by Dr Jackie Tran, an unaccredited Plastic Surgery Registrar at Geelong Hospital.

The review, which focused on dog and cat bite admissions at Barwon Hospital, Victoria over a two year period, analysed the severity and frequency of the injury then compared this to length of stay between canine and feline.

Without calculating trends and preferences in cat and dog ownership, the results of the review concluded more females are bitten by cats and more males are bitten by dogs.

“Animal bite injuries are a common occurrence and account for a significant proportion of a plastic surgeon’s caseload,” Dr Tran said.

In addition to the infective complications, Dr Tran said significant reconstructive procedures are often required and these injuries cause permanent scars, distress and sometimes disability to the patient.

“The main components of treatment are surgical debridement and antibiotic therapy, with some patients requiring a second operation.

“Fifteen per cent of patients who sustained cat bites during the review needed a second operation compared with only eight per cent of those who’d sustained dog bites.”

The review, which took into account patient variables including demographic profile, type of animal, site of injury, systemic treatment, the number and type of operation, as well as time of reconstruction, also assessed the injuries against length of stay.

Dr Tran said the single centre study in a regional Victorian hospital demonstrates how frequent animal bite injuries are, and the implications they have on inpatient bed occupancy.

“Better public education about the potential complications from delayed presentations to a medical practitioner when bitten by a dog or cat is needed. Early intervention can reduce hospital stays, multiple surgeries and unforeseen delays in returning to work and daily activities,” Dr Tran said.

Dr Tran is presenting her research at the upcoming Royal Australasian College of Surgeon’s 87th Annual Scientific Congress Sydney from 7 – 11 May, which highlights the results of her research, and details all of the patient variables associated with the treatment of animal bites from a surgical perspective.

The congress brings together some of the top surgical and medical minds from across New Zealand, Australia, and the rest of the world.

For more information about the Annual Scientific Congress please visit: <https://asc.surgeons.org/>

Media inquiries: **Gabrielle Forman, Communications & Policy Officer**
t: +61 3 9276 7430 | m: +61 498 218 008

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