



ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

MEDIA RELEASE

Child motorcycle injuries on the increase

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The average age of children injured in New Zealand motorbike and all-terrain vehicle accidents over the past decade was 10.5 years, with the youngest patient being just two years old. This is despite the minimum age for obtaining a license in New Zealand being 15 years.

Admissions increased threefold over this period, according to a study published in the latest issue of the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Surgery*.

Dr Alison Scott and colleagues at the Starship Children's Hospital in Auckland assessed the annual admission rates, severity and pattern of injuries, and patient mortality, and compared injury patterns of those riding all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and two-wheeled motorbikes (MBs).

Injuries from ATVs were more severe and patients were significantly younger than those on MBs. Young males accounted for 85 per cent of the injured.

"This is a worrying finding given that recommendations for safe ATV use in New Zealand state that no child under 12 years should drive or be a passenger on an ATV," Dr Scott said.

"Currently there are no legal regulations stipulating a minimum age to drive or ride on off-road motorcycles of any type in New Zealand, and there is no requirement for owners of off-road motorcycles to maintain or register their vehicles.

"It is imperative that legislation be developed and enforced so as to reduce mortality and morbidity from children riding on these vehicles," Dr Scott said.

The *ANZ Journal of Surgery*, established more than 70 years and published by Wiley-Blackwell, is the pre-eminent surgical journal published in Australia, New Zealand and the South-East Asian region. The Journal is dedicated to the promotion of outstanding surgical practice, and research of contemporary and international interest.

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