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MEDIA RELEASE

Injury risk from aerosol cans

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Young men are most at risk of injury when using pressurised aerosol cans, a report in the latest *ANZ Journal of Surgery* reveals.

Dr Marc Langbart and Mr John Vandervord of Sydney's Royal North Shore Hospital examined civil injuries from aerosol can explosions, flash or flame burns encountered over a six year period (December 2004-March 2011) at the hospital's Severe Burn Unit. Civil explosions are those not related to war or terrorist attack.

They found that an overwhelming majority of injured were male (97 per cent), while more than half (52 per cent) the victims were under 23 years of age.

Alarming, almost a third of injuries occurred after the deliberate misuse of an aerosol with the intent to use the contents of the can as a flame accelerant. More than two-thirds of injuries occurred in the domestic setting.

"This report highlights the potential hazard of this common commodity, with burns being the primary injury sustained after an explosion, flash or flame from a pressurised aerosol can," Mr Vandervord said.

Just over half the injuries required hospital admission and of these, 40 per cent required at least one operation, with up to 12 procedures being undertaken. The average length of stay for the admitted patients was six days.

A review of various brands of aerosol can revealed that many warning labels are small and placed at the back of the product.

"This report backs the call for heightened public awareness of the potential hazards of aerosol cans as well as for more prominent warnings," Mr Vandervord said.

"Targeted education at schools or other public health initiatives should also be considered if we are to prevent these types of injuries to young men."

The *ANZ Journal of Surgery*, now in its 80th year 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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