



Preventing and treating lawnmower injuries in children

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Efforts to prevent lawnmower related injuries (LRI) in children should be redoubled, delegates to the 81st Annual Scientific Congress (ASC) of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons have been told.

Dr David Sharp, a Brisbane based Surgical Trainee, told delegates of a recent study conducted into the incidence and treatment of LRI. "Our aim was to characterise LRI in Queensland and to develop a strategy to improve outcomes. A retrospective review of all LRI treated at the Mater Children's Hospital between 2006 and 2011 was conducted."

"Thirty-five consecutive LRI were analysed with 63 per cent occurring in spring or summer. The incidence rose steadily throughout the study period. Significantly more severe LRI occurred in spring and in non-metropolitan areas with lower levels of supervision. More severe LRI were associated with ride-on mowers," Dr Sharp said.

"These findings were generally in line with a study conducted in Victoria and published in the *ANZ Journal of Surgery* in 2008. The Victorian study did not indicate, however, the frequency with which free tissue transfer was required for soft tissue reconstruction.

"With regard to treatment two devastating LRI recently presented to our unit at Mater Children's required free tissue transfer. These recent successes with early free tissue transfer suggest that a conservative approach to soft tissue reconstruction may not be best in this population.

"LRI in children can lead to significant physical and psychological morbidity. So prevention is better than treatment," Dr Sharp concluded. "There is a need for awareness of risk factors associated with LRI and there should be a renewed emphasis on injury prevention campaigns."

This year's ASC, with the theme 'The Making of a Surgeon', runs from 6 to 10 May and is being held at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre. Approximately 2,500 delegates from Australia, New Zealand and around the world are attending.

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