



Preventing children's campfire related burns

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Delegates to the 81st Annual Scientific Congress (ASC) of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons have been told that despite being the focus of prevention campaigns, significant numbers of children continue to suffer campfire related burns (CRB).

Dr Paul Di Giovine, an Adelaide based Plastics registrar, told delegates a study was undertaken to assess morbidity, analyse injury patterns and aetiology, and highlight areas for preventative focus.

"The burns database at Adelaide's Women's and Children's Hospital was searched for CRBs presenting between 1 January 2000 and 31 August 2011," Dr Di Giovine said. "Of the 184 patients, 65.8 per cent were male, 34.2 per cent female. The majority of patients were Caucasian (83 per cent), however the number of Aboriginal patients represented a larger proportion of the greater Aboriginal population."

"The presentation of CRBs as a proportion of total admissions was similar in 2011 (6.9 per cent) to that in 2000 (6.25 per cent) with a trough in 2003 (1.9 per cent) and 2007 (3.1 per cent). The trough in 2007 coincided with an education campaign run in 2006, however the effect was not sustained.

"Fifty-nine per cent of CRBs required admission, with the average total body surface area injured (TBSA) 2.4 per cent, and 22.3 per cent of patients requiring grafting, and 4.9 per cent undergoing scar revision. Falling (31.5 per cent) or walking (21.7 per cent) into campfires were the most common mechanism. Accelerant related burns (16.8 per cent) affected older children and resulted in larger burns – on average 8.3 per cent TBSA."

Dr Di Giovine concluded that, despite education, CRBs remain a significant cause of morbidity, with similar rates of presentation today as a decade ago. "Education campaigns, though effective in the short term, must either be continued or have a more lasting effect for continued burn prevention," he said. "Potential targets for further campaigns include accelerant related burns and CRBs in the Aboriginal community."

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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