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**Two Popular Summer Activities – Bicycling and Water Sports Show a Notable Increase in the Number of Head Injuries Treated in 2009**

**ROLLING MEADOWS, Ill.** (June 16, 2010) – An in-depth analysis by the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS), utilizing just-released 2009 head injury statistics from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), yielded some alarming trends. According to the AANS analysis, there were an estimated 446,788 sports-related head injuries treated at U.S. hospital emergency rooms in 2009, an increase by nearly 95,000 from the prior year. The estimates are based on sample counts tabulated from select emergency rooms across the country. Trampolines were the only sport in the top 20 in 2008 that showed a modest decrease in 2009. Sports that exhibited notable increases from 2008 to 2009 included: water sports – 11,239 to 28,716, bicycling – 70,802 to 85,389, and baseball/softball – 26,964 to 38,394.

The biggest question is what factors contributed to these increases? “Answering this definitively would take exhaustive statistical analysis, including assessing other national databases and each sport individually. The AANS looked specifically at the scenarios involved in bicycling and water sports-related head injuries to determine if there appeared to be any trends,” stated Gail Rosseau, MD, a Chicago-area neurosurgeon and AANS spokesperson. For bicycling, the AANS looked at all injuries; including analyzing the role that cell phones/texting may have played in causing these incidents.

**2009 Bicycling Injuries**

- The estimated number of bicycle-related injuries was 551,216 in 2009. Of these, an estimated 85,389 were head injuries, 40,272 of which were incurred by children age 14 and younger. There were an estimated 14,361 concussions and 1,348 skull fractures.
- Of the 12 bicycle-related deaths, motor vehicles were involved in 8 of the incidents, and of these, head injury was the attributed cause of death in three cases. Three of the non-motor vehicle deaths were attributed to cardiac arrest and the other death to falling off the bike into a creek.

**Cell Phone/Texting-Related Bicycling Injuries**

- A 16-year-old boy was texting while riding his bike, rode through the crosswalk, and hit a moving vehicle, sustaining a concussion. He was not wearing a helmet.
- An 18-year-old boy was talking on his cell phone while riding his bike, collided with the curb, fell down and sustained a head and mouth laceration. He was not wearing a helmet.
- A 15-year-old girl was talking on her cell phone while riding her bike. She fell off and fractured her lower arm.

**Swimming Pool-Related Injuries**

The AANS included 16 different CPSC product codes in its water sports category, but limited its in-depth analysis to swimming pools, diving boards, and water slides. Not surprisingly, the AANS found that several ill-advised, but common practices can lead to head injury. These included diving into shallow water, running on the swimming pool deck, fooling around/goofing off, and age-inappropriate activities.

- A 10-year-old girl was running on the swimming pool deck, fell and hit her head on the concrete, sustaining a concussion.
- A 14-year-old girl was being thrown into the pool, slipped and hit the back of her head, sustaining a concussion.
- A 12-year-old boy was standing on his friend's shoulders in the pool, fell off and struck his head, suffering a concussion and 4 cm scalp laceration.
- A 2-year-old boy was going down the water slide with his aunt, struck his head, and sustained a closed head injury.
- A 10-year-old boy did a back flip off the diving board, hit his head, sustaining a scalp laceration, contusion, and hematoma.

Many injuries are preventable by following simple safety precautions. "By taking a minute or two to use your head, you can help prevent potentially life-altering and tragic consequences," said Dr. Rosseau. The AANS offers the following injury prevention tips:

### **Biking Injury Prevention Tips**

- Buy and use a helmet approved by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) or Snell 100 percent of the time. The helmet must fit correctly and be worn properly to be effective.
- Obey all traffic signals and be aware of drivers.
- Do not text or talk on your cell phone while biking.
- Avoid uneven or unpaved surfaces.
- Wear bright colors when riding. If you must ride at dusk or night, wear clothing that reflects light. Install reflectors on the front and rear of your bike, and use a headlight.

### **Water Sports Injury Prevention Tips**

- Provide adult supervision for younger children at all times.
- Check the depth – and check for debris in the water before diving.
- Do not dive in water less than 12 feet deep or in above-ground pools.
- Install properly locking gates and fences around backyard pools.
- Do not drink alcohol when participating in water sports.
- Don't run around the pool or push people into/under the water.
- Follow all rules and warning signs at water parks, swimming pools, and public beaches.

Founded in 1931 as the Harvey Cushing Society, the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) is a scientific and educational association with more than 8,000 members worldwide. The AANS is dedicated to advancing the specialty of neurological surgery in order to provide the highest quality of neurosurgical care to the public. All active members of the AANS are certified by the American Board of Neurological Surgery, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons (Neurosurgery) of Canada or the Mexican Council of Neurological Surgery, AC. Neurological surgery is the medical specialty concerned with the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of disorders that affect the entire nervous system, including the spinal column, spinal cord, brain, and peripheral nerves.

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