SPLINTERS & FRAGMENTS

When you think of Florida, you may picture a tropical vacation spot with beaches and Disney World. But Florida is also a predominantly agricultural state. A recent article provides us with a first comprehensive look at injury deaths on Florida farms. The authors, who are with the new Deep South Agricultural Health and Safety Center, examined 231 injury deaths, 20 of which occurred to children. The leading cause of death for both adults and children was machinery, primarily tractors. There were also deaths due to falls, electrocutions, drowning and, for women, homicide (Liller KD, Noland V, Lehtola CJ. An analysis of injury deaths on Florida farms for years 1989 through 1998. *Journal of Agricultural Safety and Health* 2000;6:131–40).

*The Indian Health Service in the US has for many years conducted a sanitation facilities construction program to develop, improve, and provide sanitary water supply and wastewater disposal to Native American homes. In Northern California, engineering technicians conducting homesite evaluations were trained to also identify certain injury risk conditions in the home environment. Technicians recorded the presence or absence of smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, fire extinguishers, fall and poisoning hazards, fire safety plans, and water heater temperature risks. They also installed smoke detectors, first aid kits, and fire extinguishers to homes that lacked these safety devices. Rather than adding to the work burden for the technicians, this program took advantage of "standby time". Assessing the home for safety made efficient use of the technicians' time, and was supported enthusiastically by the participants (Ludington JH, Newsad RS. Home safety assessment/intervention in American Indian homes in California: a role for HIS engineering staff. *Journal of Environmental Health* 2000;May:13–18).*

When dogs attack humans, there is often a public outcry against "dangerous breeds". After a young child was fatally mauled in Germany last June, the Bundestag approved a resolution calling for the banning of "fighting dogs". In the US, the city council of Boston, Massachusetts is considering a law to limit or ban pit bulls after several children were attacked. A recent study examines the breeds of dogs involved in fatal attacks on humans over 20 years. Both news accounts and the Humane Society of the United States' data registry were searched for fatal attacks. Although at least 25 different breeds were involved, more than half of the attacks were by pit bull-type dogs and Rottweilers. Most (58%) attacks involved unrestrained dogs on their owner's property with another 24% off their owner's property. Fatal attacks are only a small proportion of all dog bite injuries, and the authors conclude that breed specific ordinances may not be practical or effective (Sacks JJ, Sinclair L, Gilchrist J, et al. Breeds of dogs involved in fatal human attacks in the United States between 1979 and 1998. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 2000;217:836–40).

The known presence of firearms in a community is often accompanied by fear. But does fear motivate the purchase of firearms, or does the presence of firearms engender more fear? A nationally representative random digit dial survey of 2500 adults asked whether they would feel safer, less safe, or equally safe if more community residents acquired guns. Fifty per cent reported that they would feel less safe, while only 14% reported they would feel safer. Women and minorities were more likely to feel less safe as guns were acquired in the community. An editorial accompanying the

*study acknowledges that the epidemiological journal in which it appears did not publish a single article about firearms in its first decade of existence. This article thus marks a welcome addition to epidemiology. (Miller M, Azreal D, Hemenway D. Community firearms, community fear. *Epidemiology* 2000;11:709–14/ Cummings P Editorial: Should your neighbor buy a gun? *Epidemiology* 2000;11:617–19).*

East Germany ceased to exist as a separate geopolitical entity in late 1990. Its integration into the more industrialized former West Germany offers an opportunity to examine the effects of modernization on injury mortality. These authors examined traffic data and death certificates and found that motor vehicle related injuries and deaths increased dramatically between 1989 and 1991. Traffic deaths to young male drivers on rural roads has remained elevated since reunification, while no such effect has been found for falls, suicides, or other unintentional injury deaths (Clark DE, Wildner M, Bergmann KE. Injury mortality in East Germany. *American Journal of Public Health* 2000;90:1761–4).

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Committee on Injury and Poison Prevention has issued a new position statement on the safety of children in pickup trucks. Safety issues include the facts that:

- *In crashes involving fatalities, cargo area passengers were three times more likely to die than cab occupants, and eight times more likely than restrained cab occupants.*
- *The increased use of extended cab pickup trucks presents additional risk to children.*
- *Airbag equipped front passenger compartments create concerns about the safe transport of children.*

*The AAP recommends that occupants in pickup trucks should receive the same level of protection provided in other motor vehicles according to national policies that address occupant protection (American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Injury and Poison Prevention. Children in Pickup Trucks (position statement). *Pediatrics* 2000;106:857–9).*

A number of violence prevention programs have sought to reach adolescents through emergency medical settings, sometimes reaching out to injured teens in the emergency room. Is this an effective setting in which to influence teens? Authors of this article sought to understand teenagers' attitudes and beliefs about violence they experience and how teens perceive the role of emergency health care professionals.

Urban teenagers expressed concerns about gangs, rape, and homicide; while suburban teenagers were concerned about parental pressure and suicide. The teenagers expressed distrust of teachers, police officers, and doctors and felt safest with their parents. They viewed the emergency department as a confusing and frightening place, and believed that the role of the emergency department staff was to treat the patient's medical problem and not inquire or counsel about violence (Dowd MD, Seidel JS, Sheehan K, et al. Teenagers' perceptions of personal safety and the role of the emergency health care provider. *Annals of Emergency Medicine* 2000;36:346–50).

Have you read—or published—an interesting article recently? Please send the citation, and copy if possible, to the editor of Splinters & Fragments: Anara Guard, 44 King Street, Auburndale, MA 02466, USA (fax: +1 617 437 9394, email: guardwilliams@rcn.com or Anara@jointogether.org).

A GUARD

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