

## *Virtual Mentor*

American Medical Association Journal of Ethics  
July 2002, Volume 4, Number 7: 209-210.

### **VIEWPOINT**

#### **The Dangers of Summer**

Colleen Danz

##### Swimming

- 4,000 people lose their lives each year in drowning accidents. Drowning is the 4th leading cause of accidental deaths in the United States. Approximately 1/3 of those deaths occur in children under the age of 14.<sup>1</sup>
- In the past 10 years there have been over 10,000 reported cases of severe diarrhea, stomach aches, and other ailments from contaminated pool water.<sup>2</sup> Cryptosporidium, a bacterium that can survive several days in chlorinated pool water, accounts for 80 percent of these cases.
- From 1991 to 1996, 6,237 children aged 14 and under died from drowning. Of these deaths, 2/3 occurred in the summer. More drowning accidents occur during the month of July than in any other month.<sup>3</sup>

##### Fireworks

- Of all fireworks-related injuries, 70-75 percent occur during a 30-day period that surrounds the July 4th holiday (June 23-July 23).<sup>4</sup>
  - 7 of every 100 persons injured by fireworks are hospitalized.
  - Approximately 40 percent of those injured are children aged 14 years and under.
  - Males are injured 3 times more often than females
- 34 percent of fireworks injuries affect the hands; 12 percent, the face; and 17 percent, the eyes.<sup>4</sup>
- The US Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that in the year 2000 about 11,000 people were treated in hospital emergency rooms for injuries associated with fireworks. About 55 percent of the injuries were burns.<sup>5</sup>

##### Heat Stroke and Sunburn

- From 1979 –1999, excessive heat exposure caused 8,015 deaths in the United States. During this period, more people in the US died from extreme heat exposure than from injuries related to hurricanes, lightning, tornadoes, floods, and earthquakes combined.<sup>6</sup>
- Exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays appears to be the most important preventable factor in the development of skin cancer.<sup>7</sup>

## Boating

- According to the US Coast Guard, 734 people died in recreational boating incidents in 1999.<sup>8</sup>
- Nearly 3/4 of boating-related deaths were due to drowning.
- 89 percent of people who drowned were not wearing personal flotation devices.

## References

1. Kohn L, Corrigan J, Donaldson M; Institute of medicine, eds. To Err Is Drowning Facts and Statistics. <http://www.posiedon-tech.com/us/statistics.html>. Accessed June 21, 2002.
2. James MS. CDC sees increase in pool-borne illness. <https://abcnews.go.com/health/story?id=116619>. Accessed June 20, 2002.
3. National SafeKids Campaign. Summer Trauma Season: A National Study of the Seasonality of Unintended Childhood Injury-May 2001. [http://www.usa.safekids.org/content\\_documents?acf85.pdf](http://www.usa.safekids.org/content_documents?acf85.pdf).
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Injuries from fireworks in the United States. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.* 2000;49(24):545-546.
5. Consumer Product Safety Commission: Fireworks. <https://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpubs/012.html>. Accessed June 21, 2002.
6. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Extreme heat. [http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heat\\_guide.asp](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heat_guide.asp). Accessed June 24, 2002.
7. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.* 2000; 49(16): 354, 363.
8. US Coast Guard. Boating Safety Statistics. <http://www.uscgboating.org/statistics/stats.htm>. Accessed June 24, 2002.

Colleen Danz is a research assistant in the AMA Ethics Standards Group.

*The viewpoints expressed on this site are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the AMA.*

Copyright 2002 American Medical Association. All rights reserved.