



# **NEWS** **RELEASE**

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## **Injuries Associated with Standing Electric Scooter Use**

*February 6, 2019, Corpus Christi Texas.* Recently, electric standing scooters have been introduced to Corpus Christi with little information or public education. This has raised questions about appropriate use and regulation of these devices. A recent article in *the Journal of the American Medical Association* looked at injuries associated with standing electric scooters.

Researchers in Santa Monica, CA, one of the earliest places to receive electric scooters, looked at emergency room visits related to the standing electric scooters. In a one-year period, 249 patients presented to the emergency departments of two local hospitals with scooter related injuries. About ten percent of patients were younger than 18 years. Less than five percent of injured riders were wearing a helmet. (Helmets were required by the scooter contract and California state law at that time.) The most common injuries were head injuries (40%), fractures (32%), and soft-tissue injuries (28%). Five patients had an intracranial hemorrhage. None of the 5 patients with an intracranial hemorrhage wore a helmet. "Santa Monica is less than a third the size of Corpus Christi. Based on these statistics, we would expect to see about one thousand scooter related injuries every year," said Dr. James Mobley, Chair of the Regional Health Board.

Fifty-eight percent of patients were male. The mean age was 34 years. Ninety-two percent were riders. Eight percent were non-riders. Five percent were intoxicated. The mechanisms of injury were fall (80%), collision (11%) and hit by a moving vehicle or object (9%).

Smartphone apps allow riders to locate and unlock the scooters. Riders are charged by the minute and the riders need not return the scooter to the original rental location. Scooters can travel at speed of up to 15 mph. The scooter is a narrow platform on which the rider stands with one foot in front of the other and a waist-high rod with handlebars for steering. Riders accelerate and brake the scooter using thumb controls.

Local laws regarding electric scooters are variable, with most locales prohibiting riding on the sidewalk and requiring the use of helmets. The scooter rental smartphone applications require

riders to state that they will comply with state and local laws, show proof of a driver's license, be older than 18 years, and use a helmet, but it is unclear to what extent these requirements are followed. Riders share roads with fast-moving vehicular traffic but appear to underestimate hazards.

In an accompanying editorial, Dr. Frederick Rivara states that neither motorcycle or bicycle helmets have been tested for scooters. He also asks, "where should users of these electric devices ride? In the street with traffic? On sidewalks with pedestrians? In bike lanes with pedal bicycles?"

"I agree with Dr. Rivara that failure of a scooter company to provide safety helmets is like 'a car rental company renting cars without seat belts,'" said Dr. Mobley. "Clearly we need to develop policies that enable people to enjoy this novel experience while protecting the rider and the public."

#### References:

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The Regional Health Awareness Board was created by an inter-local agreement between San Patricio County, Nueces County and the City of Corpus Christi to promote dialogue on the health, welfare and environmental issues that affect our communities. For more information contact James Mobley, MD at [jmobley@swbell.net](mailto:jmobley@swbell.net).

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