

The Hazards of Skateboard-Riding

Skateboard-riding has become increasingly popular among Hawaii's children. The thrill of the ride and the challenge of keeping one's balance and working intricate maneuvers while speeding down a hill captures the fancy of many of our young.

This sport, however, has produced an alarmingly high toll of injury and illness. Pediatricians and emergency departments of our major hospitals have seen and taken care of large numbers of patients (aged between 3 years and 35 years, but with a distribution overwhelmingly pediatric) with significant injuries which include cerebral concussion, fractures, soft tissue injuries of varying degrees of severity and complications, and injury to internal organs.

During a three-month period at the Kauhaleolani Children's Hospital, July to August 1975, there were 16 patients admitted with the following: seven cerebral concussions, one skull fracture, five assorted bone fractures, one soft tissue injury and infection, one retroperitoneal hemorrhage, and one instance of major surgery for removal of the spleen.

During the months of August and September 1975 the Emergency Department of Straub Clinic reported the following skateboard injuries: 14 fractures, 14 soft tissue injuries, 5 lacerations, and 2 cerebral concussions. Of the 35 patients seen, three were admitted—one with an open fracture, one with cerebral concussion, and one with a skull fracture.

During a four-week period (two weeks in June and July and two weeks in August and September) at the Emergency Department of Kaiser Medical Center, 66 cases of skateboard injuries were seen with six patients requiring admission for fractures and brain concussion.

Among 20 private pediatricians who responded to our recent survey of skateboard injuries seen and treated in the office, there were 106 cases including the following: 67 soft tissue injuries, 6 lacerations, 27 fractures, and 6 concussions.

We do not as yet have data from the other major hospitals as well as from other practitioners who take care of children (general practitioners, internists, and orthopedists), but it seems fair to state that the casualty toll is high. In no other individual recreational sport has one seen such a high morbidity as skateboard-riding!

The data we have collected should alert parents and responsible authorities to the potential damage and bodily harm that skateboard-riding can inflict. Precautionary measures must be taken. Designating controlled areas with some form of supervision—a kind of skateboard safety rink—is one solution. This will have the added benefit of keeping youngsters off our thoroughfares.^o More importantly, parents and responsible adults (specifically retail outlets for skateboards) must take the task of educating our youngsters in the proper and safe use of skateboards.

^oEarly this year a tragic skateboard-car accident on the highway killed a young teen-ager riding his skateboard. There is a strong need to avoid such incidents by keeping skateboards off the streets.

HAWAII CHAPTER, AMERICAN ACADEMY
OF PEDIATRICS
FERNANDO ATIENZA, M.D., *Secretary*
CALVIN SIA, M.D., *Chapter Chairman*

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Hawaii Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics, Fernando Atienza and Calvin Sia
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