Parents need to use age-appropriate seat restraints for children

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A significant number of intra-abdominal seat belt injuries in young children can be avoided with the correct use of age-appropriate seat restraints, according to West Australian doctor Bernadette Lee.

Dr Lee said that over the last two decades, there has been an increasing shift in focus to age-appropriate restraints for the paediatric population.

“The crux of age-appropriate restraints is in the prevention of traumatic spinal, brain, and facial injuries, however there is a lack in understanding between the use of seatbelt restraints and intra-abdominal injuries,” Dr Lee said.

Dr Lee is attending the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons Annual Scientific Congress (ASC) in Perth this week to present a retrospective analysis of seatbelt restraint injuries during motor vehicle accidents.

“Our analysis investigated 161 paediatric admissions to the Princess Margaret Hospital in Western Australia from motor vehicle accidents between 1998 and 2010,” Dr Lee said.

“Details of the accidents were recorded, in particular the speed of the vehicle, type of crash, road conditions, and type of impact.

“We also investigated patient presentation details, clinical findings and the types of treatments administered.

Intra-abdominal injury as a result of seatbelt restraining in motor vehicle accident was noted in 23 per cent of the 161 admissions. Fifty five per cent of the total admissions presented with seat belt sign on their torso.

Of the 23 per cent with intra-abdominal injury, 62 per cent suffered some form of bowel injury and 41 per cent had injury to at least one intra-abdominal organ. More than a quarter required surgical intervention and more than two thirds required paediatric ICU admissions. There was no reported fatality as a result of intra-abdominal injury from seatbelt restraints.

“Some of the data required further assessment, which will be presented later, including age groups more prone to intra-abdominal injuries and percentage of inappropriate seat restraints,” Dr Lee said.

“While the cause of intra-abdominal injuries can be attributed to the mechanism of the motor vehicle accident, the risk of intra-abdominal injuries can be significantly reduced with the correct use of age-appropriate seat restraints.

“However, we cannot downplay the importance of continued research and improved technology into vehicle safety systems,” Dr Lee said.

Over a thousand surgeons from the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons as well as Scottish surgeons from the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh are gathering at the Perth
ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

MEDIA RELEASE

Convention and Exhibition Centre from 4-8 May for a series of workshops, discussions, Plenaries and masterclasses across a broad range of surgical issues.

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