Surgeons support stricter controls on quad bikes

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New Zealand surgeons are urging the Government to ban the use of quad bikes by children under the age of 16, following comments by the Children's Commissioner that voluntary guidelines are not working.

The Chair of Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) New Zealand Trauma Committee, Mr Li Hsee, says major injuries from quad bikes have been steadily increasing with increasing sales.

“Contrary to their common name, all-terrain vehicles are not suitable for use in all terrains.

“Despite having four wheels, quad bikes have a high centre of gravity and a narrow wheelbase, making them unstable.

Most injuries and deaths involve the bike rolling onto the rider and can occur at low speeds,” Mr Hsee said.

A study published recently in the New Zealand Medical Journal showed that a significant number of children were hospitalised every year due to preventable injuries caused by quad bikes.

Mr Hsee is an experienced trauma surgeon at Auckland City Hospital, and frequently deals with the consequences of quad bike accidents.

“Quad bikes are not toys; they leave very little room for rider error - a lack of judgement, a lack of skill, or even a lack of body mass and physical strength, can result in death or serious injury.

This places children at a distinct disadvantage when operating these vehicles,” Mr Hsee said.

Statistics show that there is a strong correlation between the age and weight of a person injured in a quad bike accident and the severity of the injuries that they will sustain.

“The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons has a strong history in regard to trauma prevention and around quad bikes in particular, and has championed many initiatives that have saved countless lives.

Surgeons are often on the front lines of these trauma injuries and we see first-hand the horrific damage that quad bike accidents cause to children,” Mr Hsee said.

“Every child that is injured or killed in a quad bike accident is a tragedy.

“Such deaths could be completely avoided if restrictions were put in place that reflected the danger that these machines pose to young riders, so we must ensure that children are not exposed to death or serious injury by being given access to adult-sized quad bikes.

About the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS)

RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International

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