Friday 6 May, 2016

More children are presenting at hospital emergency departments from dog bites than any other animal, according to Hobart doctor Sarah Lonie

Royal Hobart Hospital plastic surgery registrar Dr Lonie is presenting a research paper to surgeons today at the Royal Australasian College of Surgeon’s Annual Scientific Congress (ASC) in Brisbane on the risk factors of animal bites for admission and surgery.

“There is quite a high incidence of animal bite injuries in Australia but limited assessment literature as to whether a child with a bite injury will require hospital admission or surgical intervention,” Dr Lonie said.

“The Victorian-based research at Royal Children’s Hospital Melbourne over a two year period from October 2011 to September 2013 looked at the differences in managing and treating child and adult bite injuries.

Data collected included demographics, hospital admission, bite injury, antibiotics and surgical treatment

“We identified around 130 patients with an average age of 6.7 years and just over 50 per cent were male.

“The most commonly injured region was head/neck in over two thirds of cases.

“Dogs were involved in the majority of bite cases (90 per cent), followed by humans. Nearly two thirds of cases required hospital admission, surgery was undertaken in nearly 90 per cent of cases and there were no acute readmissions.

‘Compared to the adult population, dog bites were overrepresented in the paediatric group and are more likely to be head/neck injuries; while cat bite injuries typically involve the adult population.

“Children are more likely to be hospitalised and undergo surgery,” Dr Lonie said.

“The research clearly suggests that dog bites are more common in children, particularly to the head/neck region, leading to more severe injuries.

“Hospital admission and operative management by the plastic surgery department are more likely to be required in children.

“We need to raise awareness of this danger, especially to parents of young children in order to prevent such injuries,” Dr Lonie said.

About 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 Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and

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