MEDIA RELEASE

Beware of swallowing BBQ wire brush bristles

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The 86th Annual Scientific Congress (ASC) of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) in Adelaide has been told that ingested foreign bodies are frequently encountered in Australian adults and children.

RACS general surgery Trainee Dr Rafael Gaszynski has presented the results of a recent study, which found that the oral/pharyngeal location was the primary site of wire brush bristles with only a handful of cases in the rest of the GI tract.

Dr Gaszynski said that an algorithm had been suggested for the management of wire brush bristle ingestion but this mainly focused on the oropharyngeal region, as this is the most common area of foreign body lodgement.

He presented an unreported case of pancreatic injury caused by ingested BBQ bristles.

“The patient complained of vague abdominal pain, lethargy and anorexia. On the fourth presentation to the emergency department they were referred to the surgical team and a CT scan was performed, which showed the foreign body protruding from his duodenum into his pancreas.

A gastroscopy was performed and the foreign body was removed.

“The traditional ‘Aussie BBQ’ is a weekly occurrence in a lot of back yards and if a family member complains of vague symptoms and has recently used their BBQ then it could well be a BBQ wire brush injury.

“I would suggest ordering a CT scan as the initial imaging modality to aid in the diagnosis and further management.

“BBQ wire brush safety regulations should be stringent, quality control tightly regulated and manufacturer instructions supplied with indicators of when brushes should be replaced.

“Some manufacturers have suggested that if the bristles are worn down or clogged up with grease, they should be replaced. Warped or split grill brush heads should be thrown away.

“Another simple test would be to pull at the bristles with a pair of pliers using moderate force and if the bristles pull loose then the brush should be discarded,” Dr Gaszynski said.

Up to 1500 surgeons are gathering at the Adelaide Convention Centre this week for a series of workshops, discussions, Plenaries and master classes across a broad range of surgical issues.

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 Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery.

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