

Patterns of injury in helmeted and nonhelmeted motorcyclists.

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Abstract

In the present study, the incidence of severe brain injury was 600 percent higher for patients riding without a helmet and the incidence of all brain injuries was nearly twice as high in the nonhelmeted riders. All surviving patients with severe brain injury sustained residual long-term disability. The incidence of injury and death was much higher for motorcyclists than for occupants of automobiles involved in accidents. Riding a motorcycle is dangerous and riding without a helmet is fool-hardy. Helmets also protect the face, as facial fractures were twice as common in the nonhelmeted riders. There were no significant differences between nonhelmeted and helmeted motorcyclists in terms of overall injury as measured by an injury severity score of 16 or greater. Orthopedic injuries, in this study, were so common that orthopedic surgeons performed more major operations than all other surgical specialists combined. Depth of orthopedic coverage is essential to treat significant numbers of injured motorcyclists. Neurosurgeons are key members of a trauma care team. Helmet laws would help us utilize our limited neurosurgical capacity more effectively by reducing the incidence of brain injury. Medical professionals must educate the public regarding the societal and personal cost of unhelmeted motorcycle riding. Legislation mandating helmet usage for motorcycle riders must be sought.