

CONCUSSIONS

FROM PAGE 1

What airbags are to cars, this (assessment) tool is to concussion," he said.

CONCERNS

Both Czarnota and Janda are puzzled that school districts are not clamoring for a universal tool that helps recognize concussion and determines when the athlete should return to play.

"It takes a lot of the huge gray area out of the issue of concussions, and a conscientious coach is going to worry

about the health and welfare of that athlete," Janda said.

Janda's institute has studied the practice of heading the ball in soccer. Heading involves hitting the ball with the head, sometimes contacting with a 60 mph ball. The study, conducted over a two-year period, observed soccer players and a control group — kids who didn't play soccer. At the end of the first year, Janda found that more than 50 percent of the players complained of recurrent concussion symptoms long after practices were over. However, memory appeared intact.

After the second year,

greater than 50 percent had symptoms. "We started to see the kids that were heading the ball the most were experiencing a decrease in their memory abilities," Janda said. Janda recommends using a lightweight ball similar to a beach ball to practice heading and avoiding heading whenever possible.

Gone are the days when we simply accepted an athlete getting his "bell rung." As Janda explained, "Concussions can carry long-term significant complications such as permanent memory and thinking deficits and the ultimate effect: It can lead to premature death."

PREVENTION

FROM PAGE 1

but not limited to a thorough history, weight, blood pressure, pulse rate, examination of eyes, ears, nose and throat and auscultation of the heart and lungs. Flexibility and strength should also be checked.

Children should always wear appropriate protective equipment. Be sure it is the proper size and adjusted correctly. This may lessen the chances of injury.

Know and abide by the rules of the game.

Have an emergency plan for injuries. If possi-

ble, have an adult trained in first aid and supplies available. Have emergency phone numbers for parents available.

Provide proper training and skill building when learning a new sport. Warm-ups and stretching before practice and games will increase muscle temperature making muscles more elastic and flexible.

Cooling down exercises loosen the body's muscles that may have tightened up during exercise.

Match and group children according to skill level, weight and maturity. Wear light colored clothing, "breathable" clothing and hats (when possible).

Ensure that children drink an adequate amount of liquids to stay properly hydrated. Kids need 8

ounces of fluid every 20 minutes, plus more after playing. Water should be the first choice, followed by fruit juice and sports drinks. Be sure that breaks are provided.

Use misting water sprays on the body to keep cool.

Don't forget the sunscreen to reduce the chances of sunburn and potential skin cancers.

For more information visit the National Youth Sports Safety Foundation Web site at www.nyssf.org and The National Safe Kids Campaign at their Web site: www.safekids.org.

Source: www.nyssf.org, www.safekids.org and www.niams.nih.gov

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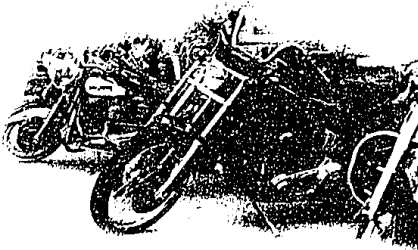
Michigan poll: Use your head, wear motorcycle helmet

Seventy-five percent of Michigan residents support Michigan's mandatory motorcycle helmet law, including the majority of male voters 18-24 years old, according to a poll recently released by the Heads First Coalition. The finding comes as no surprise to those in the health care community.

"Head injury is the leading cause of death in motorcycle crashes," said Michael Dabbs, chairman of the Heads First Coalition and president of the Brain Injury Association of Michigan.

"Michigan residents understand the inherent and often fatal dangers that are part of motorcycle riding." Michigan's mandatory helmet law, enacted in 1969, requires motorcycle operators and riders to wear helmets at all times. The law has saved countless lives and prevented thousands of injuries for more than 33 years.

House Bill 4325 and Senate Bill 321, both introduced last month, would allow those 21 years old and older to operate a motorcycle



without a helmet if they have had licenses for two years and completed a motorcycle safety course.

"This legislation flies in the face of the 75 percent of Michigan residents who support Michigan's mandatory helmet law," said Dr. James Applegate, president of the Michigan Academy of Family Physicians. "Many members of our organization call helmet repeal legislation, like the Impending House and Senate bills, 'organ donor laws' because as the number of non-helmeted accident victims rise, so does the number of available organ donors."

Statistics show that motorcyclists flirt with dan-

ger the minute they get on their bikes. Motorcyclists were approximately 21 times more likely to die in a crash than someone riding in an automobile, per mile traveled in 2000, according to the national Highway Traffic Safety Administration. And an non-helmeted motorcyclist is 40 percent more likely to suffer a fatal head injury in a crash than a helmeted motorcyclist.

"The Heads First Coalition is committed to preserving the life-saving motorcycle helmet law," said Dabbs. "We will continue to remind legislators and the public about the lives and opportunities lost when heads are not put first."

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Camp focus is health

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