



Study takes the kick out of martial arts injury

A US study into martial arts injuries can help with Australian injury prevention measures, says Sports Medicine Australia (SMA).

The study featured in the August 2007 issue of The Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport (JSAMS), published by SMA, is the first to compare paediatric karate, taekwondo and judo injuries*.

An estimated 128,400 children aged 17 years and under were treated in US emergency departments for martial arts-related injuries from 1990 to 2003; an estimated 9,300 injuries annually. Those commonly injured were male, an average of 12 years of age, who practised karate.

The most common cause of injury was being kicked (25.6%), followed by falling (20.6%) and kicking (18%). The majority of injuries occurred to the lower leg/foot/ankle (30.1%) and hand/wrist (24.5%). The most common injuries were sprains/strains (29.3%), contusions/abrasions (27.8%) and fractures (24.6%).

An author of the study, Ms Ellen Yard says the study highlights several recommendations for prevention that can be used in Australia.

"Identifying patterns of injuries among different martial arts disciplines can help decrease injury rates by facilitating the development of discipline-specific preventive interventions. Martial arts leaders can use this information to make informed decisions on safety.

"Thought should be given to padding floors in both practice and competition arenas, considering the use of hand and foot padding and ensuring participants are well rehearsed in the proper mechanics of complex moves before being able to perform them on their own.

"Floor cushioning may decrease the rate of fractures and contusions/abrasions through reducing the impact of falls, the second leading cause of injury in both karate and taekwondo," said Ms Yard.

For advice on how to further reduce sport injury risks, Smartplay, Sports Medicine Australia's sports injury prevention program has resources available. To download these resources visit www.smartplay.com.au.

To view The Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport visit www.sma.org.au/publications.

*Study located on pages 219-226 in the August 2007 issue of JSAMS

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