

Warning: include_once(/home/web/nunatsiaqonline/html//_news.php) [function.include-once]: failed to open stream: No such file or directory in
/home/web/nunatsiaqonline/html/archives/2007/709/70914/news/nunavik/70914_506.html on line 1

Warning: include_once() [function.include]: Failed opening '/home/web/nunatsiaqonline/html//_news.php' for inclusion (include_path='.:usr/share/pear:/home/web/nunatsiaqonline/html/pub/php') in
/home/web/nunatsiaqonline/html/archives/2007/709/70914/news/nunavik/70914_506.html on line 1

September 14, 2007

ATVs take toll on Nunavik youth

Montreal Children's Hospital sounds alarm as kids from territory crowd trauma unit

JANE GEORGE

Young people from Nunavik accounted for almost 10 per cent of patients treated for serious injuries at Montreal's Childrens Hospital last year, and all-terrain vehicle crashes are mainly to blame, say hospital officials.

"We had a very young kid who hit something in the middle of the night while on an ATV and sustained a pelvic fracture and a hip displacement," said Carlo Galli, prevention coordinator for the trauma program at the hospital.

Most on the trauma ward have multiple injuries, such as a leg fracture with a head injury, Galli said.

Last year, 53 young people under 18 were sent to from Nunavik to the hospital's trauma ward, mainly as a result of injuries from ATV and snowmobile crashes.



The Montreal Children's Hospital is where most Nunavik kids injured in ATV crashes are treated.
(PHOTO BY JANE GEORGE)

This means nearly one in 10 of the 650 kids in the ward in 2006 came from Nunavik - a huge number of badly hurt children for the region's small population.

Why? Because in Nunavik, few young ATV drivers or passengers observe basic safety measures, such as never double-riding, wearing an approved helmet and eye protection, following an approved training course and driving only during the day.

In other regions of Quebec, helmet use is mandatory and no one under 14 is supposed to drive an ATV.

"Basically kids under 16 should not be operating all terrain vehicles, for sure," Galli said.

About half those injured last year by ATV and snowmobile crashes were between 12 and 17. Three were babies.

Many of last year's injured children came from Puvirnituq, which had 16 admissions. Kuujjuaq had 10. Salluit had

eight.

This year, from May to July, there have been four admissions to the trauma ward from Nunavik due to ATV injuries.

And the worst is yet to come because statistics show September is the busiest month for the arrival of ATV crash victims.

After the wounds heal and patients leave the trauma ward, many face months of physiotherapy as in-patients at the hospital or, if they're more severely injured, in specialized rehabilitation centres where they can learn, for instance, how to cope with living in a wheelchair.

"The rehabilitation process is lengthy and challenging for the patient and the family members who are far from home," Galli said. "When they go back home, many still are left with a lot of problems. That's why prevention is so important."

Nine in 10 ATV crashes involve young people as either passengers or drivers. To prevent ATV crashes, doctors say no one under 16 should be able to drive an ATV and everyone should always wear helmets.

Almost half of all ATV deaths in Canada are among children 16 or younger, due to their inexperience, small physical size, lack of strength, immature motor development and poor judgment, says the Canadian Pediatric Association.

Earlier this summer, a fatal ATV crash in Ivujivik killed a young boy visiting from Inukjuak.

Montreal Children's did not have information about the number of deaths among children in Nunavik due to ATV crashes because many do not make it to Montreal.