
NTDB™ data points

“Easy rider”

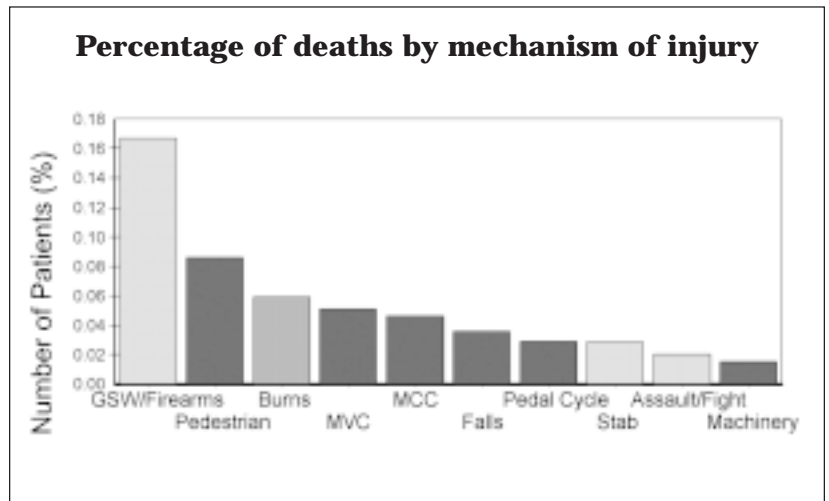
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Memorial Day is this month. This is the day when we honor Americans who died fighting in wars. However, Memorial Day also signals the beginning of summer, a time to enjoy leisure activities, to travel, and to spend time with family and friends.

For those who live in the Midwest, this weekend also represent the start of boating season and the kickoff of the motorcycle cruising season. Harsh winters and wet springs make the roads treacherous for motorcycles. By the last Monday in May, conditions are such that the motorcycle riders come out in droves.

It is unfortunate that this time with family and friends is often marred by the tragedy we see from motorcycle-related crashes occurring during this holiday weekend.

When looking at the records contained in the *Annual Report* for 2003 of the National Trauma Data Bank™ (NTDB), there are over 25,000 records involving motorcycle injuries. While this number is overshadowed by the number of records representing other motor vehicle crashes, the mortality rate is actually less than one-half of 1 percent lower for a motorcycle crash than it is for a motor vehicle crash. As represented in the graph on this page, the percentage of deaths from motorcycle crashes is the



Percentage of deaths = number of deaths divided by the number of patients $\times 100$ by mechanism of injury. Dark-grey bars represent blunt mechanisms of injury. Light-grey bars represent violent mechanisms of injury. Medium-grey bar represents burns.

third highest rate among the blunt injury mechanisms.

Taking a closer look at these records, almost one-half of all motorcycle injuries and deaths occur in patients between the ages of 35 and 54. These data correlate with statistics from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), which show a trend toward an older biking population. Since 1980, the median age of riders has gone from 24 to 38, as the baby boomers have aged.

There has also been an alarm-

ing upward trend in the number of motorcycle fatalities each year since 1997. Another disturbing statistic is that per vehicle mile traveled, motorcyclists are over 26 times more likely as passenger car occupants to die in motor vehicle crashes. This increase in yearly fatalities is multifactorial. Data from NHTSA's Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) attributes the increase to an increasing age of riders (also seen in the NTDB), the use of motorcycles with greater engine size, lack of hel-