
NTDB® data points

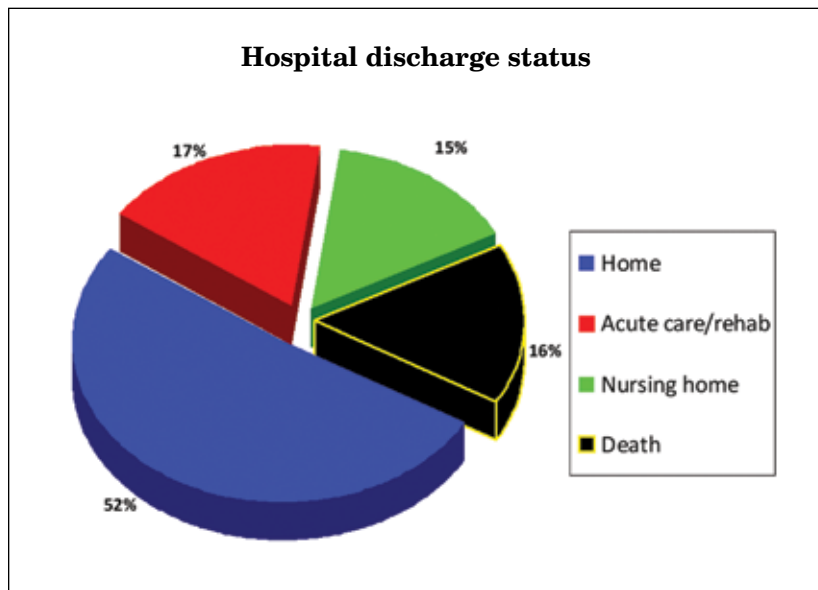
Trespassers beware

by Richard J. Fantus, MD, FACS

My home state has been the nation's rail hub for more than 150 years. Illinois leads the nation in volume of freight carried (519 million tons) on more than 7,343 miles of track, with an average of 1,200 trains per day passing through the Chicago region (http://www.createprogram.org/PDF/Illinois%20Railroads_September2008.pdf). As a result, there are railroad tracks, trestles, rail yards, and railway equipment scattered throughout the state and all of these are considered to be private property. Walking on them, or playing on them, is illegal and considered trespassing. The Federal Railway Administration of the U.S. Department of Transportation categorizes an injury that results in death during this illegal act as a railway trespass fatality. Each year, there are approximately 500 railway trespass fatalities nationwide (<http://safetydata.fra.dot.gov/OfficeofSafety/publicsite/Publications.aspx>).

A preliminary 2008 report was released this June on the top 15 states for railway trespass fatalities (http://www.oli.org/statistics/trespassing_state.htm). It comes as no surprise that Illinois is near the top of this list, and is second only to California in the number of pedestrian rail trespass fatalities for 2008.

In order to examine the oc-



currence of railway trespass injuries in the National Trauma Data Bank® research dataset 2007 admissions (formerly called research dataset 8.0), records were searched utilizing the International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision, Clinical Modification cause of injury code E800–E807 (railway accidents) with the fourth digit .2 (to identify injured person as the pedestrian).

194 incidents matched these E codes and of these, 173 records had discharge status recorded, including 89 discharged to home, and 30 to acute care/rehabilitation; 26 were sent

to nursing homes, and 28 died (these data are depicted in the figure on this page). These patients were 81.4 percent male, and on average, 36.4 years of age. They had an average length of stay of 14.8 days, and an average injury severity score of 21.1. Of those tested or suspected for alcohol, more than 60 percent tested positive.

Trains have an enormous mass and can take up to one mile or more to stop. Therefore, it is easy to understand the long length of stays, high injury severity scores, and mortality when an object like this strikes a pedestrian. Consequently, there

are a few activities to avoid: never walk, run, ride a bicycle, or operate an all-terrain vehicle down a train track; never hop aboard railway equipment; and do not fish or bungee jump from railroad trestles. Remember that railways, yards, trestles, and tracks are private property, so trespassers beware.

The full NTDB *Annual Report Version 8.0* is available on the

ACS Web site as a PDF and a PowerPoint presentation at <http://www.ntdb.org>.

If you are interested in submitting your trauma center's data, contact Melanie L. Neal, Manager, NTDB, at mneal@fac.org.

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