

Brain Waves

PREVENTING BRAIN AND SPINAL CORD INJURIES

THINKFIRST'S OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER:

Winter

2006-2007



The beauty of frozen lakes, rivers and ponds are very inviting to winter enthusiasts – but anyone who ventures onto ice is urged to use extreme caution and follow these ice safety tips:

Always be Prepared

Before heading out onto the ice:

- ❄ Check with local authorities to make sure the ice is safe. It is always better to use designated ice surfaces that are maintained by knowledgeable personnel.
- ❄ Bring a buddy with you. Always tell someone where you are going and when you expect to be back. Know a nearby street and where the nearest location is to go for help. Bring your cell phone with you.
- ❄ Bring safety equipment with you. This includes ice picks, ice staff, rope and a safety kit consisting of a pocket knife, compass, whistle, and a fire starter kit.
- ❄ Bring a lifejacket/PFD if you are snowmobiling on the ice. Wear it over your snowmobile suit or winter clothes to increase your chances of survival if you go through the ice.

- ❄ Avoid traveling on ice at night because it is difficult to see open holes.
- ❄ Avoid alcohol and drugs because they can impair judgment and reaction time.

Know how Safe the ice is

Before going on the ice, it is important to test it to ensure it is thick and strong enough for recreational use. Several factors affect ice thickness. Conditions such as currents, water depth, changing air temperature, logs and rocks all affect thickness. The colour of the ice can also be an indication of how strong it is.

- ❄ Ice that is clear blue is the strongest.
- ❄ When ice is white opaque, it is half as strong as the blue ice because it has been formed by air or wet snow freezing within it.
- ❄ Grey ice is not safe, and indicates the presences of water.
- ❄ Ice with cracks, seams, pressure ridges, slushy areas and darker areas signify thinner ice.
- ❄ Beware of ice around partially submerged objects, such as trees, logs, brush, embankments or dam structures.

In terms of thickness, ice should be at least:

- ❄ 15 cm thick for walking or skating
- ❄ 20 cm thick for skating parties or games
- ❄ 25 cm thick for snowmobiles or ATVs

Know Technique and Wear the Gear

When participating in winter activities such as ice skating or ice hockey:

- ❄ Learn basic skating skills, such as how to stop and fall safely.
- ❄ Throw out any gum or candy you have in your mouth before going onto the ice.
- ❄ Wear warm and layered clothing to protect from injuries and the cold.
- ❄ Wear a certified, properly fitted hockey helmet, which is the only helmet approved for falls on ice surfaces.
- ❄ Wear other protective equipment such as a face and mouth guard, wrist guards, knee pads, and elbow pads for the prevention of injuries during ice skating.



Ice with cracks, seams, pressure ridges, slushy areas and darker areas signify thinner ice.

We are grateful to all our sponsors who make it possible for us to convey our injury prevention messages!



The Krembil Foundation



Message from the Executive Director

What a Year!!!!

2006 has been a tremendous year of growth and reach for ThinkFirst Canada. It started in the early part of the year with the success of Brain Day 2006. Close to 1700 students were seen by neuroscience volunteers from U of T. During those 3 hour sessions, grade 5 students learned about the anatomy of the brain and why it is so important to protect it. We have set a goal of reaching 5000 students across Canada with Brain Day 2007.

In May we launched our cross Canada helmet fitting clinics in partnership with Wal-Mart Canada. Demonstrations were conducted in 27 Wal-Mart stores from Vancouver to St. John's. We have set a target of 40 stores for 2007.

In June we had a successful AGM where there were important developments. First our founder and president Dr. Charles Tator announced that he would be stepping down from his role as president of the board of directors at the end of the 2006-2007 term. While Dr. Tator will still remain on the board, this makes room for new leadership and the board is working hard to identify a potential successor to bring forward to the 2007 AGM.

The summer was marked by the Heads Across Canada Bike Tour, where four second year medical students biked from Vancouver to St. John's to raise awareness about head and spinal cord injury. We are grateful to Alun, Scott, Marieke and Pete for their passion and commitment. They are truly a credit to their chosen profession. We are also grateful to the many, many sponsors of this tour especially Canada's Home Car and Business Insurers, McDonalds, TD Securities and Cundari advertising.

Two successful ThinkFirst-SportSmart programs were

completed and launched. **A Little Respect ThinkFirst**, was a collaborative effort between ThinkFirst and the Canadian skiing and snowboarding industry which resulted in a video aimed at young skiers and snowboarders between 6-12. We worked closely with Soccer Canada and leaders in the soccer field to produce our **Smart Soccer** booklet, a resource guide for coaches, parents, trainers and anyone interested in participating fully and safely in soccer.

We are looking to re-launch and disseminate finalized versions of **Sudden Impact** and **Dive Smart**, as well as **Smart Equestrian**, all in 2007. Tweaks and reedits took place during 2006 and we are grateful to all the committee members who helped to tighten and focus these programs.

Our Concussion Road Show crisscrossed the country with presentations in Whitehorse and St. John's, culminating with a Pashby Foundation sponsored extravaganza at the Air Canada centre in November where over 750 people attended.

ThinkFirst has played an active advocacy role in injury prevention and much time has been spent in Ontario in collaboration with other injury prevention leaders, advising the new Ministry of Health Promotion on the provinces soon to be released injury prevention strategy for Ontario.

In a recent report from CIHI (Canadian Institute of Health Information) they stated that there has been a reduction in head injury admission to hospitals in the range from 17%-43% over a 10 year period ending in 2004. To the extent that our efforts have added to any of this reduction we rejoice. However, they also went on to identify that the rate of severe head trauma injury admissions among Canadians has gone up 46% over the same period. Our work is not done and we recommit ourselves to the effort it takes to

eliminate these tragic injuries.

In the midst of all this activity we managed to move offices, welcomed new board members, new chapter members, said goodbye to some staff and welcomed new staff. We are also playing a role in the Pan Canadian Health Network by sitting on the task group for injury prevention, are actively participating in the 2007 Injury Prevention conference planning, and are establishing a strategic planning process where we will identify our focus for the coming years.

ThinkFirst could not exist if it wasn't for our donors and volunteers. We thank all of our donors especially our good friends at TD Bank, Krembil, Manulife, McDonalds, Tridel, Trillium, and Pashby, all who have been long time supporters of our crucial work. Most of all, we thank our volunteers across the country who so tirelessly give of themselves certain in the belief that their efforts save lives. From BC to Newfoundland we spread the word through our curriculum, through our sport programs, through our in school presentations, through our web site. And the word is this-we can prevent injuries, 95% are predictable and if they are predictable they are certainly preventable.

I would like to wish all of our friends and supporters the very best of the season and a very prosperous and safe 2007.

Kind regards,

Jim



Safe Communities Foundation, Safe Kids Canada, SMARTRISK and ThinkFirst Canada are pleased to announce...

The 2007 Canadian Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion Conference
Evidence to Action:
Injury, Violence and Suicide Prevention

Conférence canadienne 2007 sur la prévention des traumatismes et la promotion de la sécurité
De la connaissance à l'action : La prévention des traumatismes, de la violence, et du suicide

Evidence
Connaissance



Action

TORONTO 11-13 NOV. 2007
Westin Harbour Castle, Toronto, Ontario

Save the Date!

Mark **November 11-13, 2007**
in your calendar and visit the
website for updates
www.injurypreventionconference.ca

For more information please
contact Shelley Callaghan at
purpledog@sympatico.ca or
(613) 798-8029.



SMARTRISK



thinkfirst



To obtain a 'text only' version of the
Brainwaves newsletter, please contact
brainwaves@thinkfirst.ca

Ask The Expert

Q1. I enjoy participating in winter activities, but find that my eyes hurt when I'm outside. What can I do to protect my eyes so that winter activities are more enjoyable?

Although the sun is less strong in the winter, wearing proper eye protection is important because winter conditions make eyes more susceptible to Ultraviolet (UV) damage. During the winter time, the strong winds and lower humidity levels may cause dehydration and irritation to the eyes. Also, the haze of winter and the thin clouds do not absorb UV rays as well as thick, dark, heavy clouds. Individuals who participate in mountain snow sports such as skiing or snowboarding are at the greatest risk because at higher altitudes, there is more ultraviolet light. When looking for appropriate protective eye wear, you should contact your family eye doctor. Characteristics of the best winter glasses are those that are polarized to help reduce glare, provide 100% UV protection, and wrap around to protect the entire eye. One can actually get sun burned as well during winter, so be sure to use sunscreen when participating in winter activities.

Q2. My friends and I would like to go on a backcountry winter adventure. We are aware that avalanches happen, and would like to take all safety precautions. What are some safety tips that can help us plan our trip?

In order to be safe, you need to be prepared. There are several steps that backcountry recreationalists need to take to be safe. It is important to map out the trip in detail, and to leave a copy of the route with someone who is not traveling. Routes to be taken and the risk level of each route should be known before deciding on your destination. A GPS (global positioning system) is a small inexpensive gadget that is great for these trips. This device is a good way to avoid getting lost and have fun on your trip. Always carry radios that are in good working condition. It is important to review avalanche bulletins. Bulletins provide informa-

tion on the weather, snowpack, recent avalanches, travel advice, along with an overall rating of avalanche danger. In terms of weather, it is always best to phone ahead of time for avalanche and weather reports. You should be prepared to turn back if winter conditions are more dangerous than expected. It is also important to ensure that everyone traveling is equipped with the proper tools, maps, experience and a good fitness level. Taking an avalanche course is always a good idea, and can be fun and interesting. For more information about avalanches and safety, contact your local avalanche organization.

Q3. My family and I have just moved into a new house which is equipped with a fireplace. What advice do you have so I can ensure my kids are safe around the fireplace?

As winter approaches, getting warm and cozy around a fireplace is something a lot of families like to do. Although fireplaces provide comfortable heating, they can also be the cause of many injuries, even when not in use.

Most fireplace injuries happen when children are burned by touching the glass or metal parts of the door out of curiosity or when they fall towards or against it. When in use for more than about 6 minutes, fireplace glass can reach a temperature of 200°C, which can cause a third-degree burn on contact. It takes at least 45 minutes for the glass to cool to a safe temperature once the fireplace is turned off. To avoid burns and other dangers, here are some general safety tips that should be followed:

- * Never leave a fire unattended and always supervise children when they are in a room with a fireplace.
- * Keep a fire extinguisher on hand, and make sure that all family members know where it is and how to use it.
- * Install both a smoke and carbon monoxide detector, and make sure that the batteries are working.



Taufik A Valiante MD PhD FRCS
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- * Teach children about fire safety.
- * Create a barrier to the fireplace by using a screen or a safety gate. A safety gate system can also be used to prevent children from accessing the entire room.
- * Installing nonflammable hearth cushions which are available in safety stores can help prevent burns and injuries caused by falls.
- * Keep the area around the fireplace clear of furniture, books and other flammable materials.
- * Never burn rolled newspaper, charcoal, plastic or garbage in a fireplace and do not try to accelerate a fire by using gasoline.
- * Always make sure that the fire is completely out before going to bed or leaving the house.

The safest option is to consider not using the fireplace when you have young children or using it only when they are asleep.

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Current Issue

Jeff Morrison
Taufik A. Valiante

Jeff Morrison - A Very Special Hero's Story

It was a steamy-hot July day; my buddies, Pete, Jim and I had gone swimming that afternoon, and we agreed to meet again after dinner to go for another swim. I went for a long ride on my ten-speed, had something to eat, and then met up with the boys as planned, over at Steve Miller's house. The three of us had a laugh, swimming, goofing around, and taking a couple of saunas.

It was about time to get going when I said, "one more dive..." I walked over and stood on the diving board trying to decide whether to do a cannonball, or a dive. I decided that I would do a shallow dive, and while I was in the air I turned my head to make a face at Jim who was standing at the side of the pool. My hands broke the surface of the water as they had a thousand times before, but as my body sliced below the surface, I felt the top of my head slam against the hard concrete bottom of the pool. Miller's pool was small, and not very deep, and unlike the many times in the past when I had dived in without incident, this time I was not so lucky.

I vaguely remember arriving at the emergency department at Sunnybrook hospital in Toronto, but I don't remember being fitted for a "halo" traction vest, or the screws being turned into my skull to attach the traction ring. I woke up in the ICU wearing a halo, unable to move, and in considerable pain. I remember a team of



doctors surrounding my bed and explaining to me what had happened... "you have sustained a compression fracture in your neck, resulting in an incomplete lesion of the spinal cord between your fifth and sixth cervical vertebrae..." in layman's terms, I had broken my neck.

I had never really thought about what it would be like to be paralysed. I certainly hadn't considered that there was more than just arms and legs affected; my bladder and bowels were not functioning, and my balance and equilibrium were almost totally shot. I had to be turned from side to side every four hours so that I would not develop any pressure sores on my body. I had to be fed, washed, and totally cared for by others. Whereas only days previously, I had been riding my bike, water-skiing, and playing football, I was now totally helpless, and completely reliant on those around me for my every basic need.

As one might imagine, this was the most difficult point in my life and what followed was a grueling 16 months of rehabilitation, and although my recovery was very good considering the severity of the injury, the reality was that I would never walk again. This was a difficult reality to face and I was angry and afraid, but with the support of family and friends, and the biggest 'gut-check' of my young life, I resolved to move forward and I've never looked back.

That was 29 years ago and in that time I've been able to gain an independent lifestyle, and I have forged a rewarding career as a visual artist. Professionally, my paintings have been exhibited, awarded, and sold around the world including Toronto, Montréal, New York and Paris. In 1996, I began producing my "very special Christmas cards" in co-operation with the Canadian Cancer Society, the Heart and Stroke Foundation and the ThinkFirst Foundation of Canada. Twenty five cents from each card is donated to these charities, and to date, over 200,000 cards have been sold. (visit www.verbspecialcards.com)

Although I have been able to overcome daily adversity and thrive, the fact remains that I probably would never have taken that fateful dive if I had had the opportunity to learn about pool safety from a ThinkFirst program. I would have known that it was unsafe to dive into a pool that was only six feet deep, but unfortunately, there were no such programs in 1977. Fortunately, there are today, and I encourage everyone to support ThinkFirst in its efforts to prevent serious injury.

In most cities across the country we have a core group of volunteers including our V.I.P.'s (Voices in Injury Prevention), who will come and address your students. They will share personal stories of how their lives have been adversely altered because they did not consider safety and injury prevention. For further information, please call 1.800.335.6076 or e-mail national@thinkfirst.ca

Yes, I want to prevent brain and spinal cord injury in Canada's youth. I would like to support ThinkFirst Canada in the amount of _____.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Postal Code: _____

Telephone Number: _____

E-mail: _____

Method of payment:

Cheque enclosed

VISA

VISA Card number: _____

Cardholder's Name: _____

Expiry Date _____

Signature: _____

*All donations over \$10 are eligible for a charitable tax receipt. Please make all cheques payable to **ThinkFirst Foundation of Canada.***

A LITTLE thinkfirst RESPECT

THIS PROGRAM:

- educates young skiers and snowboarders about the risks of injuries. Experts JEN ASHTON and HUGO HARRISON communicate the message of safety and injury prevention while skiing and snowboarding.
- emphasizes skill, respect, responsibility, equipment, and more!
- is suitable for skiers, snowboarders, coaches, trainers, teachers, parents, school field trips, as well as for use by ski schools and resorts.
- is targeted towards ages 6-12.
- is a bilingual program, that is in DVD format. The DVD is accompanied by a CD consisting of a booklet and a safety brochure.



ThinkFirst Foundation of Canada is a non-profit charitable injury prevention organization.

To order our materials please visit http://www.thinkfirst.ca/curriculum_order.asp.

Please help ThinkFirst prevent injuries by making a donation. All donations over \$10 are eligible for a charitable tax receipt. Please make all cheques payable to ThinkFirst Foundation of Canada.

To subscribe to BrainWaves, or send us your feedback, please send an email to brainwaves@thinkfirst.ca