

Reducing trauma in the youth of Australia

by Janet McLeod

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As clinicians we know that injuries are often preventable, particularly those acquired through the toxic combination of alcohol and/or drugs and risk-related behaviour.

The inaugural report of the Australian Trauma Registry (*Alfred Health*) shows that 15-25 year olds are the most likely to be admitted in an Australian designated trauma centre. Males were 3.8 times more likely to suffer major injuries than females. It also shows that approximately half of all trauma patient admissions are road-transport related.

P.A.R.T.Y. (Prevent Alcohol and Risk-related Trauma in Youth) is one of many programs seeking to reduce the overrepresentation of youth in the trauma statistics. Unlike other programs with this goal however, P.A.R.T.Y. occurs **in a hospital**, not at a school or in a classroom and is led and delivered by clinical staff. The Program is a full day trauma prevention experience aimed at senior school students, young offenders, trainees and apprentices. It seeks to give participants a snapshot of the possible traumatic and often preventable consequences of risk-related behaviour through vivid clinical reality.

A standard P.A.R.T.Y. program day incorporates short visual presentations in the first half of the day by a range of health professionals to prepare the participants for what they will see and experience in the hospital environment, giving context to injury, risk, choices, and consequences. The second part of the day sees P.A.R.T.Y. participants spend time with staff and those effected by trauma in the Emergency/Trauma Centre, the Intensive Care Unit, trauma wards, and rehabilitation units of the hospital getting an up front, true to life experience of the impact of trauma on young lives. Many hospitals have also developed specifically tailored programs designed to appeal to and engage with particular participant populations. For example the Royal Perth Hospital has a much sought after presentation that engages Aboriginal youth in the community and the Royal Melbourne Hospital deliver a program for young offenders.

P.A.R.T.Y. has been delivered at Trauma centres in Australia since 2006 when 652 participants visited the Royal Perth Hospital and in 2015 over 10,000 participants are expected to be exposed to its key messages of “*Choice, Risk and Consequence*” amongst the 15 sites running the program.



The Australian hospitals undertaking P.A.R.T.Y. are:

- The Royal Perth Hospital (WA)
- The Royal Perth Hospital - Bunbury Health Campus, Denmark Campus, Albany Campus (WA)
- The Alfred (VIC)
- The Royal Melbourne Hospital (VIC)
- The Royal Brisbane and Women’s Hospital (QLD)
- Nambour General hospital (QLD)
- Gold Coast (QLD)
- The Royal North Shore Hospital (NSW)
- Liverpool Hospital (NSW)
- Royal Adelaide Hospital (SA)
- The Canberra Hospital (ACT)
- University of Tasmania and Royal Hobart Hospital (TAS)

Each facility has its own site licence purchased from Sunnybrook Medical Centre, Canada where the program originated in 1986. Each Program differs based on the hospital resources, staff, and local hospital environment but all follow a similar format and are based on the same trauma prevention messages of smart choices, the



perception of what constitutes risky behaviour, and the lived experience of traumatic consequences.

It is hoped that exposing young people to the possible traumatic consequences of risk-related behaviour will have an impact on their perceptions and the choices they may make in the future.

Research to date

A study conducted at Ottawa Hospital in Ontario, Canada sought to determine whether the P.A.R.T.Y. program had an impact on injury prevention knowledge, attitudes or behaviours of youth at six weeks after completion of the program and found that youth have significantly improved knowledge about risk factors for injury and more positive attitudes towards safe behaviour [5].

In addition, an analysis of 10 years of the P.A.R.T.Y. Program in Canada concluded that P.A.R.T.Y. effectively reduced the incidence of traumatic injuries by 4% (5% in females) among 1281 of its participants compared to a matched control group of teens who did not participate [2].

Another study published in 2012 has demonstrated a reduction in the acuity and rate of recidivism in Juvenile Justice Offenders who attended P.A.R.T.Y. in WA. [3, 4]

An economic analysis found that the P.A.R.T.Y. injury prevention program involving real like trauma scenarios was cost-effective in reducing subsequent risk of committing violence or traffic related offences, injuries, and death for juvenile justice offenders in Western Australia. [3, 4]

Currently evaluation of impact is measured at all sites with an average across Australia of 97% of participants and 99% of supervisory staff saying via an anonymous feedback form that they would recommend the program to others.

Research is being planned and undertaken at many sites in Australia at the present time. With the continued connection between site coordinators and the establishment of more sites across Australia, the opportunities for multi-site research initiatives will become a possibility.

Testimonials

“Makes people realise outcomes of making stupid decisions and who it affects. The real life situations, families, patients, and equipment proved that these things could happen to any of us” – Student - Year 10

“Brilliant! Well organised day broken up with appropriate amounts of theory and practical components. I know a couple of the students have the tendency to be quite apathetic. To see their engagement is a testimony to the program” – Teacher - Year 10

[My staff and I] all agreed [The Program] was a stunning and inspirational experience and amazingly, the students have been talking to other students about it ever since. I have rarely known in my career an experience like it.”
Vice Principal

It has influenced me and my thoughts about taking risks - and may save someone's life – Student - Year 11

“It's an exciting program to be involved with and a great opportunity and platform to highlight the consequences that can occur when things go wrong - every session has made me feel that maybe we have helped just a little bit to decrease teenage trauma”
Emergency Nurse

“...it was hard having my son lying still in the ICU (Intensive Care Unit) not knowing if he would wake up. But, I had a story to tell and if telling our story can save another mum from the same pain and the awful phone call....I will keep on telling it”
Mother of Patient visited by group.

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Royal Perth Hospital leading the way in road safety

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As a surgeon for more than 20 years, I have seen first-hand the impact of road trauma. The injuries that I have seen at Royal Perth Hospital's State Adult Major Trauma Unit have been some of the most devastating youth related road trauma that I have encountered. Already this year more than 30 people have lost their lives on Western Australian roads.

Added to this terrible toll, more than 100 others have sustained critical injuries in road crashes. Last year, WA had the worse fatality rate of any other Australian State, with young males continuing to be overrepresented with 80 to 86 percent of major trauma aged between 15 to 24 years of age.

My experience in seeing the impact of road trauma on young people led me to look at ways that we could raise awareness about the importance of road safety. Royal Perth Hospital is the first hospital in Australia to roll out the P.A.R.T.Y (Prevent Alcohol and Risk Related Youth) Program which is a licensed Canadian Program running in around 100 hospitals globally. The success of the Royal Perth Hospital Program has seen us expand it into regional areas including Bunbury, Denmark, Geraldton and Albany, and after our success, a number of States across Australia have also established the program.

Since commencing in 2006, our reality-based Program has won numerous awards and we have seen more than 8,500 Western Australian teenagers come through the program. Attendees learn about traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries, and meet trauma patients in the intensive care and trauma wards. The Program addresses social and safety issues around drug and alcohol use, violence, aggression, and encourages teenagers to learn first aid.

The 2014 Royal Perth Hospital Trauma Registry data shows that road safety continues to be a key issue for youth aged between 15 and 24 involved in a major trauma. The Program content therefore includes a significant focus on road safety including seatbelts, safe cars, driver behaviour/distraction, helmets and other protective gear for motorcyclists and cyclists. We continue to evolve our program to ensure that it is evidence based and reaches our vulnerable teens that are most likely to exhibit risk-taking behaviour.

The Program continues to be overwhelmingly popular and evidence to date has shown that it is not only cost-effective but also reduces the risk of youth committing to violence or traffic related offences, injuries and death. The Royal Perth Hospital team is proud of our program as we are making a real difference in raising awareness of the impact of reckless decisions on the road. It is a very rewarding experience as we have changed lives and witnessed the impact the Program has on participants, some of which may have ended up in our in our care if they didn't experience the reality of road trauma.

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The social and economic cost of road related injury and death

by Dr John Crozier

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Introduction

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons was integral in 1960's and 1970's working alongside pioneers dedicated to bringing an end to the escalating carnage on the roads. Pioneering Fellows of the College advocated to change public opinion, public behaviour and influence legislators. The resulting radical changes included mandatory seat belts, helmets for cyclists and drink driving laws - all of which accounted for the massive downturn in the rates of road trauma.

The collection of trauma data has been on the radar of trauma professionals since the recommendations of the National Road Trauma Advisory Council report on Trauma Systems in 1993, and the Victorian Review of Trauma and Emergency Services in 1999 which recognised trauma registries as having the potential to improve care of the injured patient. The Australian Trauma Registry delivered its inaugural report in 2014 (<http://www.ntri.org.au/quality-improvement/austqip>) which, through data entry and analysis, provided an opportunity for comprehensive analysis of injury - the first time such an analysis has been possible. The report highlighted:

- 15-24 year olds had the highest incidence of injury
- Over half of all injured patients admitted were the result of vehicle-related accidents
- Nine-in-10 seriously injured patients survived their trauma after receiving hospital care

The quality assurance of the registry, benchmarks performance against national and international standards, which, through consistency and high performance trauma care throughout the country, effects improved patient outcomes and ensures all future seriously injured people have the best chance of survival and recovery from injury. The Trauma Committee is committed to supporting the sustainment of the Australian Trauma Registry and the further maturation of the registry, data entry and data analysis to help effect Australian trauma system quality improvement.

The College is committed to ensuring the highest standard of safety and comprehensive surgical care for the community we serve through excellence in surgical education, training, professional development and support. As part of the commitment the College strives to take