The Prevalence of SAFETY RESTRAINT USE in Emergency Department Patients

Lori Weichenthal, MD; University Medical Center, Department of Emergency Medicine, Fresno CA and Tricio Saliz, RN, MS; University Medical Center, Fresno, CA

OBJECTIVE

To determine the rate of safety restraint usage amongst individuals presenting to an urban, level one trauma center emergency department (ED) for care and to ascertain the reasons that this largely Hispanic population does or does not use restraints.

METHODS

This study was a prospective, cross-sectional observation survey conducted during the month of August, 2001 at an urban level one trauma center. All medically stable patients presenting to the ED during the time periods when a trained research assistant was present were approached to complete a survey on safety restraint usage. The survey was administered in English, Spanish, and several Asian dialects. The data was entered into an Excel spreadsheet, and we calculated the restraint usage rate along with descriptive statistics.

RESULTS

During the study period, 381 subjects were approached. 227 agreed to participate in the study, a response rate of 59.5%. 52% of the subjects were male. 43% were Hispanic, 27% Caucasian, 14% Afro-American, 6% Asian and 10% other. 90% stated they wore restraints to the ED. 79% stated they always wore a restraint, 15% almost always, 5.5% sometimes, and 0.5% never. 97% of all respondents were aware that restraint usage was required by law. Of the participants who stated they wore a safety restraint, 37% stated they did so because it was safer and 13% stated because it was required by law. Of the 10% of the participants who did not wear a restraint, 26% stated they did not because it wasn’t comfortable and 11% didn’t because a restraint system wasn’t available to them.

CONCLUSIONS

A large majority of people presenting to an urban level one trauma center ED stated that they used safety restraints. Most patients who did not use restraints were aware of the legal requirements and improved safety, but most often cited lack of comfort or availability as reasons for non-use.