



July 22, 1991

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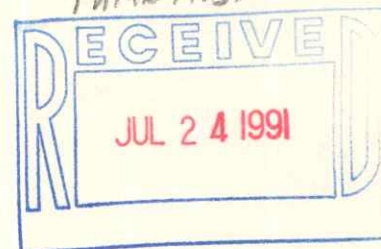
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*Injury Prevention;
Think First*



Dear Dr. Ramzy:

I read with interest "Water Sports Can Cause Spinal Injuries" in the June 1990 issue of your newsletter and would like to update your readers on the activities of the national prevention program featured in the article.

THINK FIRST/The National Head and Spinal Cord Injury Prevention Program was formed in 1986, by the American Association of Neurological Surgeons and Congress of Neurological Surgeons. THINK FIRST addresses all the major causes of these injuries, including aquatic injuries. It is based on the experiences of two programs begun in the early 80's by neurosurgeons in Florida and Missouri. Clark Watts, MD, now Director of the Department of Neurosurgery at MIEMSS, is the program's original co-founder. Now, more than 200 groups in 45 states have received training in how to conduct the program in their communities. More than one million young people have been reached.

THINK FIRST is a comprehensive trauma prevention effort that addresses injuries caused by motor vehicle crashes, falls, sports and recreation (especially diving), and, where applicable, violence. We target teens, those at high risk for these injuries. The program's underlying assumptions are that teens often do not listen to adults giving them safety messages, and that injury-producing, high-risk behaviors are highly affected by peer pressure. We try to affect attitudes and high-risk activities of the students through peer-to-peer safety education. Thus, the speakers giving the school presentations should be young people to whom the students can relate.

The five-part school curriculum begins with the award-winning film "Harm's Way", followed by a brief discussion of the anatomy of the head and spinal cord and statistics showing why this age group is at highest risk. Next, a young person who has had a head or spinal cord injury speaks frankly with the students about how his or her life has been affected by the injury. The program closes with a demonstration by emergency medical personnel of proper bystander behavior at the scene of an injury, and an optional wheelchair obstacle course.

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The program has received several national awards and has expanded rapidly since its inception. Last year the AANS/CNS formed the THINK FIRST Foundation, a tax-exempt, charitable organization, to oversee and secure funding for the program.

For more information about how EMT's may join this award-winning program, or for information about contributing to the THINK FIRST Foundation, contact national coordinator Louise Miller at 22 South Washington Street, Park Ridge, Illinois 60068, 708-692-9500.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Louise S. Miller". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Louise S. Miller, MA
National Coordinator

cc: Clark Watts, MD

LSM/jp