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Changing Trends Show Elderly at Increased Risk for Facial Injuries

[Rosemont, IL, April 1, 2014] Common causes of fractures to the face and jaws include motor vehicle collisions (MVCs), assaults, sports injuries, job related injuries, domestic violence and falls. A study featured in the April issue of the *Journal of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery* looked at trauma data collected by oral and maxillofacial surgeons at the MetroHealth Center in Cleveland, Ohio over two six-year periods, 20 years apart (1984 to 1990 and 2004 to 2010). The authors compared the differences in the data related to the types of incidents that caused the facial fractures and the age of the patients who suffered these fractures.

The study, entitled “Changing Trends in Maxillofacial Trauma: Is the Elderly Population at Increased Risk for Severe Injury?” revealed significant differences between the 1990 and 2010 studies in both areas. Overall, fractures due to assaults and MVCs decreased during the 20 year interval, while fractures due to falls increased, going from 3.6 to 22.1% of all facial fractures. Comparison by age categories also revealed major changes. Facial fractures in patients 21 to 40 years old decreased from 61.7% to 35.3%, while those in patients 41 to 65 years old increased from 13.1% to 35.4%, and patients at least 66 years old experienced an increase in facial fractures from 0.2% to 14.5%.

The authors concluded that both the causes of, and the age groups affected by, facial trauma had changed significantly in the 20 years between 1990 and 2010. A decrease in assault-related injuries in younger populations and an increase in the incidence of falls among the elderly were the main differences. The greater number of falls accounted for a substantial rise in the number of elderly patients with facial trauma. This change, the authors note, emphasizes the need for adequate prevention programs, as well as appropriate teams of oral and maxillofacial surgeons to manage these injuries in older patients.

Read the complete study findings at *J Oral Maxillofac Surg.* 72:750-754, 2014.

The Journal of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery is published monthly by the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons to present to the dental and medical communities comprehensive coverage of new techniques, important developments and innovative ideas in oral and maxillofacial surgery. Practice-applicable articles help develop the methods used to handle dentoalveolar surgery, facial injuries and deformities, TMJ disorders, oral cancer, jaw reconstruction, anesthesia and analgesia. The journal also includes specifics on new instruments and diagnostic equipment and modern therapeutic drugs and devices.

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