



FOCUS ON SUBSPECIALTIES

Pediatric neurosurgeons partner with injury prevention groups



Dr. Turner

by **Michael S. Turner, M.D., FAAP**

The Academy has always taken a leadership role in injury prevention through its Committee and Section on Injury, Violence and Poison Prevention (COIVPP and SOIVPP). AAP policies, technical reports, press releases and political advocacy have set a standard for professional organizations in injury prevention.

Pediatric neurosurgeons, as the physicians who often must deliver the devastating news to a parent of a child with a fatal or life-altering injury, likewise have a significant interest in injury prevention. Neurosurgeons in 1986 founded the Think First National Head and Spinal Cord Injury Prevention Program, now known as the ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation.

ThinkFirst has 200 chapters in the United States, a sister foundation in Canada with more than 40 chapters, as well as an international committee that oversees more than a dozen international chapters. Each of these chapters is anchored by a ThinkFirst chapter director who has been trained in hands-on injury prevention.

ThinkFirst has focused on collaboration with other injury prevention efforts in the community; many of the ThinkFirst chapter directors also serve as Safe Kids coordinators, child restraint technicians and supporters of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, EN CARE (Emergency Nurses CARE) and others.

ThinkFirst has three major educational programs. The first and signature program is ThinkFirst for Teens. This is a classroom or assembly presentation utilizing injury prevention specialists and Voices for Injury Prevention (VIP) speakers who have survived a brain or spinal cord injury. Presentations are available to high school, middle school and college students, and often are presented in health or driver education classes.

The injury prevention specialist shows an award-winning video depicting various scenarios and discusses risk factors, unsafe behaviors and strategies for making safe choices. The VIP speaker then personalizes the result of risky behaviors by telling his/her own story. Students hear

firsthand how a poor decision can change a person's life forever, and are captivated by this powerful and engaging testimony.

To instill fundamentals of safe behavior, the message must be delivered at an early age. ThinkFirst for Kids (TFFK) is a curriculum-based program for first, second and third grades. It uses a cartoon character, Street Smart, in an animated video as well as curriculum with hands-on exercises in five areas of safety, including vehicle, bicycle, playground and water safety as well as violence prevention. TFFK has been validated in a number

of studies as being able to instill a safety message and impart knowledge effectively.

ThinkFirst for Youth (TFFY) also is curriculum-based, providing teachers with innovative safety lessons and activities for grades four through eight. Adolescents learn about the brain and spinal cord, and learn to make safe choices confidently on their own and with their peers.

ThinkFirst chapter directors in the United States and Canada have developed many other programs to deal with safety issues in hockey, skiing, hunting and distracted teen driving, to name a few.

Pediatrician involvement

ThinkFirst's U.S. chapters cover thousands of communities. The ThinkFirst chapter director is a local resource for injury prevention activities and materials. Chapter directors can work with local physicians to provide programs to schools, present injury prevention programs, and serve as a resource for injury prevention facts and issues.

The ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation can assist hospitals and medical schools in starting a ThinkFirst chapter. Chapter and speaker training is available as well as curriculum and ongoing consultation. Chapters are required to have a sponsoring physician, who serves as an advocate and adviser.

The ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation complements the activities of the AAP COIVPP and SOIVPP. ThinkFirst is interested in partnering with others who are committed to making their communities safer for children and their families.

Dr. Turner is a member of the AAP Section on Neurological Surgery.

RESOURCE

For more information on ThinkFirst, call 800-844-6556 or e-mail thinkfirst@thinkfirst.org.