

Industry-Relevant Research for
Camp Professionals from ACA



2008

Healthy Camp Update



Markel is proud to be an ACA
Mission Partner and sponsor of
the ACA Healthy Camp Study.

Year Two of the *Healthy Camp Study* is Now Completed!

With continuing support from ACA Mission Partner, the Markel Insurance Company, the second year of the American Camp Association's pioneering five-year national study of camp injuries and illness was completed in 2007. A total of 160 camps provided data for Year 2. A summary of the Year 2 results and recommendations for interventions that camps can integrate before next summer will be published in *Camping Magazine* in the March/April 2008 issue.

In this issue of the *Healthy Camp Update*, we'll learn the perspectives of medical staff and camp directors who are currently involved in the Healthy Camp Study. If you're not familiar with the study, or if you haven't yet enrolled your camp, we encourage you to read the perspectives of others who are benefitting from this important study. We'll also share some key indicators of successful participation in this study based on feedback from participating camps.

The *Healthy Camp Study* — Chore or Challenge for Camp Nurses?

Susan B. Baird, R.N., M.P.H.

Nurses are crucial to the success of the *Healthy Camp Study*. Now I acknowledge that I am biased, but right from the initial planning it was envisioned that nurses and other key camp health staff would be the likely data collectors and reporters in most camps. Through the doors of the health center come a seasonal parade of campers and staff with their collection of injuries and illnesses. In 2007, nurses were the reporters at 43 percent of resident camps and 9.5 percent of day camps. Health center staff, which may include nurses, physicians, EMTs, and paramedics, were the reporters in 52.3 percent of the resident camps and 22.3 percent of day camps. As you consider whether or not to enroll for the summer of 2008 (Year 3), you might want to think a little about the nurse's role and the operations of the health center.

What Does a Camp Nurse Do All Day?

Ever wonder what camp nurses do all day? Well, they certainly don't sit under a big shade tree reading a great novel with a pocketful of band-aids just in case the need arises. You will see the nurse out and about keeping an eye on the general health of the camp community. They do find value in participating in some of the camp activities and treasure those rare opportunities. When I'm asked what I do all day, I respond that my biggest

responsibility is to be sure that I am always ready for whatever might come next through the health center door. This readiness means having the organizational skills to manage constant interruptions in routines; the knowledge and experience to assess the next problem; the orders, know-how, and supplies to treat the incident; and the protocol knowledge to guide documentation, follow-up care of the individual, and appropriate communication with others.

Campers and staff come to the health center with all kinds of things from abrasions and turned ankles to headaches and homesickness. Often some detective work is needed to get to the actual issue. Next, the nurse might be called to an activity site to tend to an injury. There's no end to the variety of issues that arise. Yesterday is not like today, and this year is not like last year. We seem to recall more trips to the hospital last year. Or was that two years ago? Remember when everybody in camp got "the bug" and lots of kids had to go home? Let's hope we don't see that again!

A Tool for Nurse "Detectives"

The *Healthy Camp Study* has the potential to be the best available information source for camps about the health and safety of its campers and staff. As the largest surveillance study of illness and injury ever undertaken, the five-year study



provides participating camps with information summaries of their own experiences and of all participating camps. Both resident and day camps participate with their data being tabulated separately for ease in comparison. By collecting the data over five years, unusual occurrences can't skew the data. In the first-year data, for example, it looked as though horseback riding was producing a lot of injuries, especially among staff in the early days of staff training. This observation did not hold up in the second-year data. With two years of data now available for review, we are beginning to identify obvious sources of injury that we believe can be reduced by proactive interventions.

We now begin an exciting phase of the study—looking at patterns of illness and injury, seeing what holds up and what doesn't, and beginning to develop incident-reduction strategies. Nurses will find good information to integrate into their health and safety components

A Camp Director's Perspective of the Healthy Camp Study

Tom Riddleberger; Director, Campus Kids-NJ

Every camp director places the safety and health of campers and staff at the top of the priority list. This is why every camp director needs to take a serious look at the nationwide *Healthy Camp Study*. Participation requires no cost and minimal effort on the part of each camp, but the benefits to our individual camps and our entire profession are enormous.

When I first heard of this study, I assumed that our camp didn't have the administrative resources to be part of what sounded like a complicated, sophisticated research project. I had responded to off-season online surveys before, but I assumed that neither my staff nor I could respond to a survey during the summer itself. I was wrong!

We discovered that we had to devote only about an hour a week to provide information that already existed in our daily health center records. The online reporting system was simple, and friendly telephone support was available if needed. And, if we didn't have time that week to submit our report, we could put it off until later in the summer when we could catch up. It really was impossible to say, "We can't do this!" The benefits far outweighed our efforts. Our camp received a confidential report on injuries and illness for the summer and the data necessary to compare our camp to others across the country! Only we knew the data for our individual camp; in the compiled national report we are lumped in anonymously with all the other camps. As the study continues, we'll have multiple years of data so we can track our progress as we strive to make our camp the safest and healthiest possible. We also have the satisfaction of contributing to an unprecedented national research effort that will reap benefits for every camp for years to come.

You're throwing away a golden opportunity if your camp doesn't participate. It is definitely not too late. This study is for all camps, whether part of ACA or not. Show your campers, parents, staff, and professional colleagues that health and safety are at the top of your priority list. Join the *Healthy Camp Study*.

of staff training. They can compare their own camp's experience with the overall data and identify areas where their camp is really doing better than others and where they may want to target their safety and disease control efforts. They can now answer parents when they ask the question, "How safe is your camp?" Camp nurses like to tend to injuries and illnesses in ways that get campers and staff back to their activities as soon as possible. They don't like to see campers or staff sidelined from fun activities, and they really don't like to see anyone have to go home. Camp nurses like to see their sick beds empty unless a restful time out will help ease a tummy ache or headache. Camp nurses like to play detective and figure out what causes injuries and illness, and then they like to be creative about how to reduce these events. These nurses know when "camp is tired" and schedules may need to be temporarily adjusted for rejuvenation. They know when the daily log is revealing that footwear policies are not being followed (lots of slips and falls) or adequate hydration is not being addressed (lots of headaches, fatigue, and weakness). Ask the nurse which activities seem to yield injuries. They know that Capture the Flag is a terrific game but not when the grass is wet. Rest assured that the nurse can look at the daily schedule and know when to put extra ice packs in the freezer.

Study Reporting: A Welcome Challenge

Are we adding more work for the nurse? Based on responses from participating camp health staff, the answer is "a little, but not too much." Nurses already collect most of the data needed for study input as part of the regular camp documentation process, through their logs, incident reports, etc. They can readily identify other necessary pieces of information, like the number of campers and staff participating in camp each day. Once your nurse understands the value of the *Healthy Camp Study* and the actual tasks they will assume, I would find it hard to believe they would see the study as a chore. I found the time requirements very manageable and consider the reporting tasks a good use of my time. After I was provided with initial online training and had completed the first week of reporting, I found the weekly reporting took about ten minutes and about five to ten minutes to report each incident. We had seven incidents last year—remember at a resident camp you are only reporting the cases that put the camper or staff member out of their usual activities for four or more hours. The trick I found early on is getting the data together when the incident occurs so that reporting becomes a matter of using the data to complete the point and click form. The very act of reporting has increased my awareness of the range of situations that can result in a four-hour time loss from activities. With data in my hands, I have numbers to substantiate preventative actions. It's a welcomed challenge.

As chair of the Healthy Camp Study Advisory Committee, I urge you to get involved in this study. Our goal is to increase the number of participating camps and to assure geographic distribution of participating camps. The results of these efforts will be richer data, a true picture of the health and safety of our camp community. If your camp is not participating in this study, your nurse is not yet connected to a terrific health promotion opportunity. My take-home message is: If your camp is not participating, contact me. I'd like to tell you more.

Susan B. Baird, R.N., M.P.H., is a camp nurse at the Boston University Sargent Center for Outdoor Education and editor of CompassPoint, published by the Association of Camp Nurses.

Making Study Participation Workable — What We've Learned

Susan B. Baird, R.N., M.P.H.

Commit to Participation

Registering your camp in the study means making a commitment to both your camp and to the *Healthy Camp Study* sponsors and to the larger camp community. Be sure you are able to make that commitment in terms of the staff time to collect and report the information and the capability to enter your data on a regular basis for the summer. (See the table in the sidebar for a list of the types of information you'll be asked to report for each incident.)

Identify Key Players and Equipment

Before the season starts, think through who will be gathering and reporting data. Your health center staff may be logical for collecting the illness and injury data but who has the daily number of staff and campers? Make a definite plan for who gets that information to the reporter and when it is needed each week.

Think about your computer availability, because participation in the *Healthy Camp Study* will require your reporter to use a simple online system called Camp RIO. If your designated reporter does not have direct computer access, what computer is available and how accessible is it at times the reporter can enter the information? Although an Internet connection during the summer is preferred for reporting purposes, a limited number of camps who must phone-in data on a weekly basis will be accepted. Assure in advance of the season that the reporter has the computer skills needed to complete the training and use the system each week.

Announce Participation

Take advantage of this marketing opportunity. Tell your staff, your campers, and their parents that your camp is a study participant. This is a positive approach for letting everyone know that camp health and safety is a priority at your facility. It also underscores your commitment.

Prepare Key Players and Equipment

Make sure that whoever is gathering information and doing the reporting knows that this is part of their responsibilities for the season. Make sure that your reporter receives the training material as early as possible and that he or she understands his or her tasks. Check your computer to be sure you can access the Camp RIO system. Discuss any problems with the research staff at The Ohio State University. They are very good at problem-solving.

Post Vital Information

Each participating camp is assigned a unique identifying number that is used each time the reporter enters the system. Several camps have reported losing that number and having to spend time getting it again. Our advice—get that number and tape it to the computer being used for reporting as well as noting it on your data gathering file, inside your log book, or any place that makes sense to your reporter. Have it in more than one place to save yourself frustration.

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Reporting Information

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| About the Person: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Age and sex.• Role at camp.• Pre-existing chronic health condition.• Length of time at camp (this season). |
| About the Incident: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where the incident happened (included out-of-camp option)• Name of the activity in which the person was engaged when incident occurred.• Time of day the incident occurred and during what week of camp.• Mechanism(s) or object(s) influencing the incident, especially use/non-use of protective equipment.• How long it took before the person returned to their camp routine.• Relationship of the incident to an existing chronic health condition. |
| About the Injury or Illness: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diagnosis; what was the problem?• Part(s) of body involved.• Description of primary symptoms experienced.• Presence of secondary injuries or illnesses as a result of this incident.• For illness: communicability assessment. |
| About the Context: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Credential of professional who treated the injury-illness.• Experience of the data reporter (had this person been trained to report data?).• Weather influences (e.g., rain, high humidity, extreme temperatures, altitude).• Participation in formal safety training preceding incident. |

Data Gathering

Gather data as the illness or incident unfolds. Usually the health center log and an incident sheet will contain most of the data. At the suggestion of current participants, a worksheet has been developed that you can download and complete so that you will have the needed information for entry. Develop your own identifying code for each case. A simple system uses C or S for camper or staff, the individual's first and last initial, and the number of the case that season. Thus an entry of CSS3 entered in the margin of your log book tells you that camper Sammy Smith is the third reportable incident you have had this year. Have a file where you put all of the information for reporting. Write your camp's identification number on the front of the folder. Add the number of campers and staff for each day of the preceding week, and you are ready to do the reporting.

Data Reporting

Your designated reporter will get an online reminder each week. They can sign on and see at a glance whether they are up to date. Many camps find it easiest to report weekly while the information is fresh but that is not required. You can also go back and update your filing if further information becomes available.

Trouble Shooting

You will get information about contacts for problem-solving. If your reporter can't sign on, is not getting reminders, or can't get back into previous information, then help is readily available. The *Healthy Camp Study* research staff members are very resourceful and welcome the chance to make reporting a smooth process.

Susan B. Baird, R.N., M.P.H., is a camp nurse at the Boston University Sargent Center for Outdoor Education and editor of CompassPoint, published by the Association of Camp Nurses.

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Enroll Your Camp Today!

Mary Marugg, R.N.

Entering the third year of data collection, the *Healthy Camp Study* is a unique opportunity for camps to take advantage of a powerful risk management tool. The data already indicates areas where specific preventative measures can be implemented to keep kids in the woods and out of the health center. Innovative camp directors who have joined the study will be in a great position to carry out strategies to keep kids safe and in good health. Knowing the trends that are emerging nationwide is giving camp leadership framework for training staff in camp routines and procedures.

Any U.S. day or resident camp may enroll, and the only obligation is to enter data on a regular basis through the summer. At the end of each season, participating camps will receive a summary of all the summer's data, as well as a report of how their camp measured up against other participating camps. All information provided to the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital and The Ohio State University is aggregated with data from other camps for summary report purposes. No sponsoring organization ever sees data from individual programs.

More camps participating will strengthen the study. Take advantage of the opportunity to join camps who are investing in learning how to keep kids safe and keep kids healthy.

Remember!

- There is no charge to participate.
- Any U.S. day or resident camp can participate, and no special affiliation is required.
- Camps are asked to commit for the three remaining years in the study — 2008 through the summer of 2010.
- Your camp health staff (or other designated reporter) will receive detailed training information before the beginning of the summer to prepare them for the reporting process.

Mary Marugg, R.N., is co-director of Sonlight Christian Camp, Pagosa Springs, Colorado.

Sign Up Now to Commit Your Camp to the *Healthy Camp Study*

- Agree to review your health log weekly and provide data on all events that meet study criteria (only those that keep campers/staff out of program for four or more hours).
- Provide weekly report via Internet or phone.
- Receive summary report for your camp compared to all U.S. data.
- Receive training on how to report incidents.
- No charge to participate.

Sign up today at

www.ACAcamps.org/research/healthycamp.php