Cycling accidents in the Netherlands
An overview of risks, injuries, causes and consequences for policy makers

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Background and aim

- In the Netherlands the total annual distance travelled by bike is 14.5 billion kilometers.
- There is an increasing use of electric bicycles up to 25 km/h.
- Common belief is that the electric bicycle is more dangerous and that smartphone use causes cycling accidents.
- Most people treated at an ED due to a traffic injury in 2017 are cyclists (see figure 1).
- The Dutch Injury Surveillance System (DISS) monitors accidents and injuries at 14 ED’s. DISS is representative and provides the possibility to perform follow up studies with patients.
- Aim: new insights in accidents and injuries, especially with electric bicycles and smartphone use.

Method

- DISS follow up study: case control study.
- Retrospective questionnaire (paper and online).
- Case: patients who visited one of the DISS ED’s after a cycling accident in 2016 (N=3.146; response rate: 37%).
- Control: with cyclists who did not have a bicycle accident in 2016 (N=1.811; response rate: 54%).

Key results

- Most accidents happen with 4-17 year and 55-74 year olds.
- The number of accidents per kilometer travelled increases with age (see figure 2).
- Cyclists on an electric bicycle seem more likely to be treated at an ED, but this difference disappears after controlling for distance travelled.
- Injury severity does not differ between cyclists using an electric and a classic bicycle, after controlling for age.
- Smartphone use at the moment of the accident was seldom mentioned (see table 1).
- Behaviour plays an important role as well as conditions of the road (see figure 3).

Conclusions

- The electric bicycle does not lead to more accidents than a classic bicycle.
- The risk of a cycling accident increases with age.
- The use of the smartphone does not often lead to cycling accidents that have to be treated at an ED.
- Prevention should be focusing on behaviour (awareness) and conditions of the road.

Figure 1: ED visits with serious injuries after traffic accidents (2008-2017)

Figure 2: Cycling injuries by age, sex and total distance travelled

Figure 3: Causes of accidents

Table 1: Pursuits at the time of the accident

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pursuit</th>
<th>&lt; 25 years</th>
<th>≥ 25 years</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On the phone handfree (holding phone to ear)</td>
<td>4 (0.3%)</td>
<td>5 (0.3%)</td>
<td>9 (0.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the phone handfreefree</td>
<td>6 (0.2%)</td>
<td>2 (0.2%)</td>
<td>2 (0.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busy texting/chatting/etc.</td>
<td>8 (0.8%)</td>
<td>1 (0.2%)</td>
<td>9 (0.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busy doing other things on the phone (mail, google, surfing…)</td>
<td>9 (0.9%)</td>
<td>8 (0.6%)</td>
<td>17 (0.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21 (1.9%)</td>
<td>16 (0.8%)</td>
<td>37 (1.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to music/ wearing headphones</td>
<td>70 (6%)</td>
<td>32 (2%)</td>
<td>102 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking to someone I was cycling with</td>
<td>232 (21%)</td>
<td>122 (6%)</td>
<td>354 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A distracted mind (thinking about something)</td>
<td>45 (4%)</td>
<td>74 (4%)</td>
<td>119 (4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>