

**For Immediate Release:**  
**June 10, 2008**

**First National Study to Examine Golf Cart-Related Injuries**

*New study warns drivers and passengers about risks associated with golf carts*

(COLUMBUS, Ohio) – The popularity of golf carts has skyrocketed in recent years -- unfortunately so have the number of golf cart-related injuries. In fact, a new study conducted by researchers in the Center for Injury Research and Policy of The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital found that the number of golf cart-related injuries rose 132 percent during the 17-year study period.

According to the study, published in the July issue of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* (now available online), there were an estimated 148,000 golf cart-related injuries between 1990 and 2006, ranging from an estimated 5770 cases in 1990 to approximately 13,411 cases in 2006.

As golf carts have become faster and more powerful, they are no longer limited to use on the golf course. In addition to their traditional role, golf carts are now routinely being used at sporting events, hospitals, airports, national parks, college campuses, business parks and military bases. While the study found that the majority of golf cart-related injuries (70.3%) took place at sports or recreational facilities, individuals injured in carts on the street had an increased risk of concussions and were more likely to require hospitalization than individuals injured in other locations.

While the most common cause of injury for all ages was falling or jumping from the cart, study co-author Gary Smith, MD, DrPH, director of the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital, and an associate professor of pediatrics at The Ohio State University College of Medicine explained, "Children are even more likely than adults to fall from the golf cart, and these falls are associated with higher rates of head and neck injuries and hospitalizations. Greater efforts are needed to prevent these injuries."

More than 30 percent of golf cart-related injuries involved children under the age of 16. "Because golf carts are not designed for children and the majority offer no child safety features, we recommend that children under the age of 6 years not be transported in golf carts and that drivers be at least 16 years old to operate the vehicle," said study co-author, Tracy Mehan, MA, CPST.

The study recommends that more effective safety features, such as improved passenger restraints and 4-wheel brakes, in combination with training programs and safety policies would reduce the overall number of golf cart-related injuries.

## **FIRST NATIONAL STUDY TO EXAMINE GOLF CART-RELATED INJURIES**

**(Page 2 of 2)**

“Following a few safety precautions, such as driving at a reasonable speed, wearing seat belts when they are available, braking slowly, and considering the terrain and weather conditions can reduce the potential for injuries,” said Mehan. Facilities where golf carts are used can also help prevent golf cart-related injuries by establishing safety policies, requiring driver’s licenses and operator training, and considering safety when designing the pathways golf carts will be using.

Data for the study were collected from the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS), which is operated by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. The NEISS dataset provides information on consumer product-related and sports and recreation-related injuries treated in hospital emergency departments in the U.S.

**The Center for Injury Research and Policy (CIRP) of The Research Institute at Nationwide Children’s Hospital** works at the local to international levels to reduce death and disability due to injuries through research, education, advocacy and advances in clinical care. CIRP aims to improve the scientific understanding of the epidemiology, prevention, acute treatment, rehabilitation and biomechanics of injuries. CIRP educates health and other professionals, policy makers and the public regarding the importance of injuries, injury research and injury prevention. CIRP provides leadership in the development, implementation and scientific evaluation of public policy regarding control of injuries. Learn more about CIRP at <http://www.injurycenter.org>.