Honorable Minister -

I am writing to you on behalf of the Canadian Nursing Students Association: Community and Public Health Committee. As active members and advocates within the healthcare system, we would first like to congratulate your province on adopting bicycle helmet legislation for all ages. However, we have growing concerns regarding the enforcement of bicycle helmet legislation across the country. Despite the success of enacting helmet legislation that applies to all cyclists, the legislation alone is not enough to ensure long term compliance with helmet use by citizens of all age ranges. Disturbingly, within Canada, of all the severe trauma related injuries associated with cycling from 2001 to 2010, roughly 78% of these active cyclists were not wearing a helmet at the time of the accident (Huybers et al., 2016).

In Ontario, for example, where helmet legislation for minors is in place, we still see a lack of helmet adherence and related deaths of minors. Of the 129 cycling deaths between 2006 and 2010, 15% were under 19 years and only 27% were wearing a helmet (Parkin, DeGroot, & Macpherson, Fuselli & MacArthur, 2014). If there had been better enforcement of the law – how many of these young people need not have died?

Studies have shown that combining awareness campaigns, educational marketing and enforcement leads to sustained helmet use across all ages (Huybers et al., 2016). A program created by Nova Scotia called Operation Headway-Noggin uses this effective, multifaceted approach and includes effective helmet education and giveaway promotions (Huybers et al., 2016).

Let us also consider the financial benefits. Between 1994 and 2008 there were over 60,000 hospitalizations across Canada due to cycling without a helmet and one third of hospital admissions that are related to cycling are due to head injury (Dennis, Ramsay, Turgeon & Zarychanski, 2013). Imagine the decrease in health care expenditures if our citizens were protected from a majority of these injuries. Investing in injury prevention such as all ages bicycle helmet legislation can be an effective cost saving measure for your province – it is estimated that for every dollar spent on bicycle helmets that thirty dollars in injury costs are prevented (Miller & Levy, 2000).

You have started the investment in the health of Canadians in your province by enacting all ages bicycle helmet legislation, continued enforcement and education can be an effective cost saving measure for your province – it is estimated that for every dollar spent on bicycle helmets that thirty dollars in injury costs are prevented (Miller & Levy, 2000).

We would respectfully urge you to consider the health of Canadians in your district and work towards more comprehensive enforcement and education around all ages helmet legislation.

This student led campaign is proudly supported by the Community Health Nurses of Canada
References


