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Letter to the Editor

Pediatric non-fatal drowning events: do they warrant trauma team activation?



To the Editor,

We read with interest the article by Chotai *et al.*¹ discussing traumatic injuries and the involvement of trauma teams for drowning events involving children. We agree that the routine activation of trauma teams in drowning cases may be unwarranted, and criteria should be reviewed. As the authors rightly state, drowning is a leading cause of death worldwide, especially in pediatric populations. Our concern, and reason for corresponding, is the continued use of outdated terminology in the title and text of this article; namely the term “near-drowning”. In 2002, the World Congress on Drowning developed the following uniform definition for drowning: “The process of experiencing respiratory impairment due to submersion or immersion in liquid.”² With this definition also came the recommendation to discontinue the use of modifiers such as “near”, “secondary”, “wet/dry/delayed”, and “active/passive.” Whereas “drowning” was often used to describe a fatal event, based on this uniform definition, which has been adopted by the World Health Organization, International Liaison Committee on Resuscitation and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the primary definition does not include outcome. From this definition, terms like “fatal”, “non-fatal”, or “drowning with morbidity” can be used to better describe the event. The use of outdated terminology is unfortunately not a rarity in peer-reviewed literature, as a systematic review we recently performed and are seeking publication of, found that 32% of drowning-related articles over the past 6 y included non-uniform terminology. We see this as an opportunity for education and hope that readers, authors and journal editors can work towards improving the use of uniform drowning terminology in practice and research so that patient treatment and data collection may be optimized. This includes using the correct terminology in education programmes, medical reports, publications and the media.

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