The PREVENTABLE Adult Drowning Pandemic

Call To Action: A Focus on Adult Drownings and Actions to Decrease Drowning Incidents

Presented By:
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Overview

• **Purpose:** To discuss why there is minimal focus on drowning prevention of teens and adults.

• **Objectives:**
  1. Examine adult drownings and compare the drowning rate of children to adults the past 10 years
  2. Bring awareness through research about adult drowning
  3. Review statistics related to drowning to include environmental and cultural diversity
  4. Identify best practices in the aquatics industry for water safety actions related to adult drownings (what is currently being done?)
  5. Provide a snapshot comparison of the United States adult drowning rate and the Marine Corps adult drowning rate
  6. Develop ideas going forward to target the leading demographic in fatal drownings (what can be done?)
Introduction

• Drowning (WHO 2014) is a leading global killer among teens & young adults (15-24)
  • Media focuses on accidental drownings of young children.
  • Where is the focus on the adult drowning rate?
• Does adult comfort around water and swimming ability influence children’s interest in swimming?
• What is being done to target adult drownings?
  • It may be beneficial to create more water safety and swimming programs developed for teens and adults as a proactive approach to minimize the amount of overall drownings.
Shocking Statistics

• How many adults (15 and over) drown?
  • Males between the ages of 15-24 (twice as likely as females) and children under five have the highest drowning rates. (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
  • More than half of all Americans (54%) either cannot swim or do not have basic swimming skills (American Red Cross)
  • More than 1/3rd of adults in the United States cannot swim the length of a swimming pool (United States Masters Swimming, 2019)
  • There were 1487 adult (18 & older) drowning deaths compared to 786 youths (under age 18) (USA Swimming, 2017)
  • Every day, an average of 10 people die in the U.S. from unintentional drowning, 80% are over the age of 15 (CDC, 2014).
Comparison Between Adults and Youth

Number Drowning Deaths: Adults vs Youth

- Adult
- Youth
# Adult Drowning Pandemic

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<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
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Civilian Population Statistics

• 2009-2018: 62.4% of the drowning deaths were adults compared to 25.7% (12-under) (USA Swimming, monthly drowning report, 2018)

• Adult drownings ages 15-24 are mostly male (CDC, 2014)

• The CDC (2014) reported that about 80% of drowning victims are 15 or older.
  • Two high risk factors include: neck fractures caused by diving into shallow water and alcohol

• Teens and young adults tend to drown in natural bodies of water, like rivers and lakes (CDC, 2014)
"Adults need to know how to be safe in the water before they can protect their children and can take a Red Cross swim course for adults. But just as importantly, parents should learn about water safety and know how to respond to a water emergency" (ARC, 2014)

A survey of 1,000 adults in the U.S. found that the magnitude of the problem may be greater than imagined with one in every two adults (48%) having reported a life-threatening submersion experiences LTSE (Petrass et al, 2012)

In North America, 5-11% of all drownings occur in submerged vehicles (Stallman et al, 2017)

96.1% of self-reported non to weak swimmers perceived that they could complete a swim of less than 100 m. Only 54.4% of self-categorized good to excellent swimmers reported they could complete between 300–400m+ continuously. The other self-categorized good to excellent swimmers reported that they could not complete 100m continuously (20.2%), or could only complete 100–300 m (25.4%) (Petrass et al, 2012)
Swimming Demographics

• Environmental Limitations
  • Adults typically drown in natural water bodies
  • Older children and adults drown further from home – while working, travelling, on vacation

• Income Level
  • Lower income levels tend to miss out on sports and activities that cost money – including membership to pools and swim lessons

• Cyclic Family and Cultural Patterns
  • Living in a rural area
  • Living a sedentary lifestyle
ETHNICITY

• According to CPSC pool safely, African Americans and other minorities have higher drowning rates compared to drowning rates for whites for all age groups
  • American Indians/Alaska natives were twice as likely, and blacks 1.4 times as likely, to drown as whites (Gilchrest, 2014)
  • 64% of African Americans do not know how to swim; twice as many compared to whites (pool safely, 2018)
• African American parents are more fearful of their children drowning compared to white parents (pool safely, 2018)
  • Inability of adults to swim may encourage fear of water in their children
• Based on history, swimming is perceived to be a “white activity” (Dawson, 2006)
WHO - 2014: FOCUS ON KEY LIFE STAGES APPROACH TO DROWNING

• Reduce Drowning Deaths in Young People Aged 15–24 Years
  • Reduce high-risk behavior including Alcohol consumption and Drug-related drowning deaths while engaging in water activities
  • Among teens and adults, alcohol use is involved in up to 70% of deaths that occur during water recreation
• Reduce Drowning Deaths Attributed to Watercraft and Recreational Aquatic Activities
• Reduce Drowning Deaths in High-risk Populations
• Reduce the Impact of Disaster and Extreme Weather on Drowning Deaths
The Marine Corps population is not immune to drowning incidences either, however, there have been some stopgap measurements put in place and more are being developed as an attempt to decrease the number of Marines who accidentally drown.
Narrative
Marine Corps Scope

Fiscal Year 2014

- Lifeguarded - about 1,850,000 visitors at both outdoor and indoor bodies of water
  - 17 miles beach front
  - 46 swimming pools
- Total Active Duty Marine Corps population: 185,264
- Number of rescues: 1,254
- Number of fatalities (on a Marine Corps installation): 1
- Number of fatalities (off a Marine Corps installation): 2
- 0.0016% drowned in 2014 (MC AD population [17+])

Fiscal Year 2017

- Lifeguarded - about 1,367,632 visitors at both outdoor and indoor bodies of water
  - 17 miles of beach front
  - 44 swimming pools
- Total Active Duty Marine Corps population: 185,514
- Number of rescues: 988
- Number of fatalities (on a Marine Corps installation): 0
- Number of fatalities (off a Marine Corps installation): 4
- 0.0022% drowned in 2017 (MC AD population [17+])
Action Steps: Marine Corps

What has been done?
• A drowning prevention campaign was developed and introduced to the force prior to the 2013 summer season. This campaign only lasted for one season. We are unable to make a correlation between the campaign and the decrease in drowning deaths. The campaign was primarily directed toward children.

What are we doing now?
• Tying promotion to MCWSP level
  • Should see a decrease in Marine drowning deaths in 2020.
• Marine Corps specific swimming curriculum
  • For our Marines to learn to swim and have the skills to pass their required Marine Corps Water Survival Level
• Developing Standardized Messaging aimed at adults
  • 101 Days of Summer brief
  • Public Service Announcement
  • Marine Administrative Notice focused on a water safety message
Marines Mastering Aquatics (MMA)

• Based on the water survival levels and standards
  • Each plan is progressive, covers a topic on water safety and relies on repetition

• 3 Goals:
  • Assist Marines with passing their MCWSP training using logical and progressive swimming skill development plans
  • Improve general water confidence in each participant
  • Not only emphasize swimming proficiency, but general water safety around any body of water

• The development of the curriculum and achievement of the goals are being accomplished by utilizing the current learn to swim methods
I. WATER SURVIVAL BASIC
1. Execute 25 meter
2. Conduct self rescue
3. Stay on the surface
4. Conduct gear shed
5. Employ floatation gear

II. WATER SURVIVAL INTERMEDIATE
1. Employ floatation gear
2. Conduct self rescue
3. Stay on the surface
4. Conduct gear shed
5. Buddy assist (active)
6. Buddy assist (passive)

III. WATER SURVIVAL ADVANCED
1. Perform survival strokes
2. Conduct self rescue
3. Rescue victim (4 rescues)
Action Steps: Military & Community

• Utilize your company health and wellness program and allow use of a pool not just a land-based workout

• Learn to swim: Swimming is more than a recreational activity; it is a potentially life-saving skill
  • Encourage adult swimming lesson (at least water safety briefs) during children swim lesson
  • USMS clubs offer swim lessons. Lessons can be supported by grants from the USMS Swimming Saves Lives Foundation

• Educate adults about the risk of getting into distress quickly and quietly in the water

• Talk about adult drownings at Town Hall, Lion’s Club meeting, etc.
Summary

- Aquatic activities have an inherent risk associated with participation.
- Participation in aquatic activities is always going to be popular.
- We need to address drowning prevention in all populations by enacting evidence-based programs.
- We must focus on adults along with the younger population.
- Adults are drowning at a high rate, and as a professional in the aquatic community, we must begin to address this population.
Call To Action

Place some resources and energy into stopping the adult drowning pandemic in our respected community as an attempt to decrease the overall drowning percentage, as these actions may impact the number of child and youth drowning as well.
Questions
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References