CAN'T HANDLE THE HEAT - Public holidays and an increased incidence of coal burns in the paediatric population

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Introduction

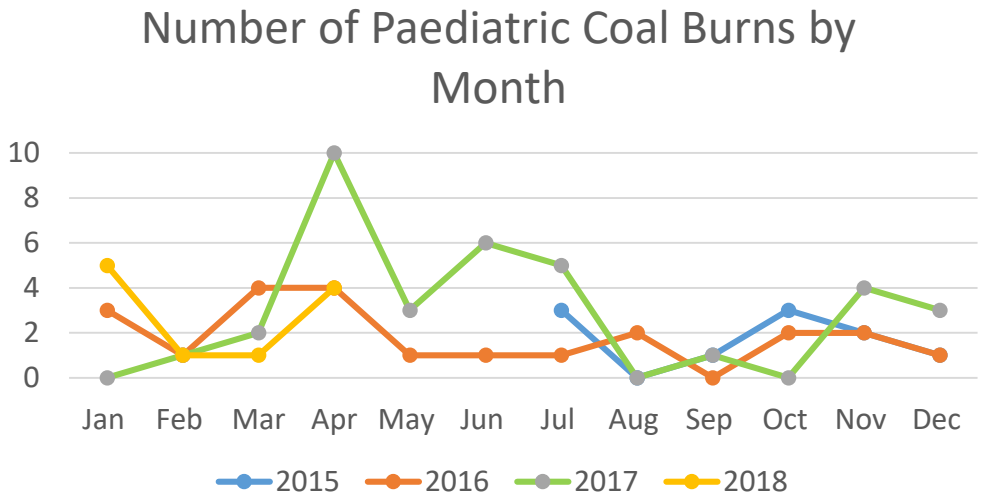
- Australians love camping, and a campfire is often an integral component of this past-time. Unfortunately, coal and flame burns related to campfires are a significant cause of burns in the Paediatric population.

Method

- We undertook a retrospective review from July 2015 to April 2018 at the Royal Children's Hospital, Victoria to examine trends in the incidence of such burns, and their temporal relationship to public holidays. Data was collected from outpatient records.

Results

- During this three-year period 78 children sustained burns from either flames or hot coals in relation to campfires. 38 (50%) of these were sustained on a public holiday or within a 'public holiday period' (defined for this study as the weekend immediately before or after a public holiday). The vast majority of burns (89%, n=68) were sustained by contact with hot coals after the fire had been extinguished with 65 sustained at least 1 day later. More than 96% (n=75) of burns were treated entirely in the outpatient setting with only 3 patients requiring surgical management.



Discussion

- Whilst building a campfire is an exciting and popular pastime for many Australians, the data above suggests a lack of public understanding in regards to appropriate fire safety measures – in particular, proper methods for extinguishing an open fire. We propose an increase in public education targeted around public holidays where there is a known increase in the incidence of such injuries within the paediatric population.