

Should bikers be forced to wear helmets?

By ACSH Staff — October 16, 2012

Earlier this month we [told you](#) [1] about an interesting dilemma faced by cities implementing bike sharing programs whether or not they should require users to wear helmets, which may increase biker safety at the cost of decreasing ridership. Piet de Jong, a professor of applied finance and actuarial studies at Macquarie University in Sydney, argues that pushing helmets really kills cycling and bike-sharing in particular because it promotes a sense of danger that just isn't justified. He asserts that the benefits of encouraging more biking may outweigh the risks by as much as 20 to 1.

But now Canadian researchers say bikers who don't wear helmets have about [triple the risk of dying from head injuries](#) [2]. Navindra Persaud, MD, of the University of Toronto and colleagues examined the records of 129 fatalities in Ontario from 2006 to 2010, 71 of which involved head injuries. The 58 other cases were considered controls. Examining the data, they found bikers who did not wear helmets were 3.1 times more likely to die from a head injury than helmeted cyclists.

Still, ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross isn't convinced that cyclists should be forced to wear a helmet. The 71 deaths occurred over four years in a province of 12.8 million people and cycling provides many benefits as far as improved cardiovascular health and building muscle mass. Helmet requirements might deter hundreds of thousands of people from cycling, he says.

But ACSH's Dr. Elizabeth Whelan says cities are correct to stress helmet use.

People should be riding bikes, but they should be wearing helmets, too, she says. Would you want to be skinny but have your head banged in? When you ride a bike, wear a helmet!

We all agree that anyone under 18 should be required to wear a helmet our concern is for adult bikers. So to resolve this little disagreement, we ask you, our loyal *Dispatch* readers: Do you wear a helmet when you bike? Should cyclists be required to wear helmets? Would requiring helmets discourage biking?

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[1] <http://www.acsh.org/another-angle-on-bike-helmets/>

[2] <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/story/2012/10/15/bike-helmet-deaths.html>