

Prevention Extension

VOLUME 7

THE BPN NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2019



**TOGETHER
WE FIGHT
FOR A WORLD
WITHOUT
BURNS**

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Working to Create A WORLD WITHOUT BURNS!

Burns are the third leading cause of unintentional injury to children under 14 years of age in the US. Compared to the overall population, children under five are twice as likely to be seen for burn injuries at a hospital emergency department. These are the facts. The Burn Prevention Network is working to change these facts!

That begins with comprehensive fire safety and burn prevention education delivered to all children in grades 1–8 and to parents and caregivers of children 5 and under.

On a monthly basis, the Network delivers its “Home Safe Home” Kits to parents of newborns courtesy of area pediatric practices, State Farm Insurance Agents and the Mother-Baby Unit and Family Birth and Newborn Centers at the Lehigh Valley Health Network. These Kits include an educational video and a Safety Checklist to educate new parents about the risks for burn injury to newborns and toddlers and how to eliminate these risks. Over 4,000 families are reached with “Home Safe Home” each year.

Four-times each year over 300 early care centers receive a seasonal issue of “Safety Lines”, a newsletter written expressly by the Burn Prevention Network for families with pre-school age children. Each issue provides safety tips relating to seasonal activities and lifestyles as well as games and family-centered activities to reinforce burn safety. 14,000 families are annually served by “Safety Lines.”

On a much larger scale, our two school-based programs, “Flick’s Fire and Burn Safety” and “The Great Escape,” are delivered to elementary and middle schools throughout our 22-county service area. These teacher-delivered programs include grade-level lesson plans, associated student workbooks, original educational videos, and additional resources. Each lesson plan is integrated with State Educational Academic Standards. Over 300,000 children receive this training each year!

As you can see, the Burn Prevention Network is dedicated to a “World Without Burns!”



So, Are We Winning?

The tagline of the Burn Prevention Network is, "Creating a World Without Burns!" To be more specific, our mission is to reduce both the incidence and severity of burn injury, promote the appropriate care for burns and support those who survive serious burn injury. So, how are we doing with that?

In the early 1980's, over 2 million burn injuries per year were reported in the USA. In 2018, that number is estimated at 400,000, an 80% decrease! Similarly, fire and burn-related deaths in 1980 were near 10,000 per year. Last year, the American Burn Association reports a total of 3,655 deaths from fire and burns. That's a 63% reduction!

Furthermore, a 2018 study released by the American College of Surgeons confirmed that there has been a "dramatic increase in burn injury survival over the past 30 years." According to study author David N. Herndon, MD, FACS, chief of staff and director of research at the Shriners Hospitals for Children, Galveston, "Mortality has decreased three to fivefold since the 1980's."

So, there has been both a decrease in the number of persons being burned, an overall reduction in the severity of burns, and a greater likelihood of surviving serious burn injury.

On the surface, it indeed does appear that we are winning! Let's look at some of the reasons!

The aforementioned American College of Surgeons study cites the following advances for the improvement in survivability: improved protocols for management of inhalation injury; focus on nutrition management to combat infection and aid in healing; and receiving early burn excision and skin grafts immediately following injury.

But what about the impressive reduction in the number of persons being burned? The answers here are more complex and difficult to document. Certainly, one contributor is better product design and regulation. To be specific, most cigarettes



sold in the US now are mandated to be self-extinguishing if not actively inhaled. Add to that the fact that over 75% of all private residences now have at least one installed smoke alarm. Another recent injury prevention product design includes mandated protective screens for glass-fronted gas fireplaces, which keep small hands away from extremely hot surfaces.

Education also plays an important, but more difficult to document role in burn prevention. The Burn Prevention Network is a national leader in this arena! Our targeted prevention programs reach over 400,000 persons at highest risk to burn injury each year. Messages such as, "Stop, Drop and Roll", "Crawl Low and Go" and "Hot Liquids Burn Like Fire" have become universally understood.

We may be winning, but victory cannot be claimed until this devastating injury is even more infrequent. Within our own communities, the restrictions on the sale of dangerous fireworks have been recently relaxed. Many neighborhoods resemble virtual war zones during the week of July 4th! Mandated residential sprinklers in new construction was removed from the Pennsylvania Building Code several years ago. Reversing these two unsafe actions would further reduce the incidence of injury and expensive property damage.

With your support, the Burn Prevention Network will continue to educate, advocate and support those in need in our quest for a "World Without Burns!"



GIVE THANKS *and* BE SAFE!

During the holidays, spending time in the kitchen is a natural part of family customs. We typically have more “cooks in the kitchen” than normal, and often involve our kids in the preparations. But did you know that Thanksgiving is the leading day of the year for home fires involving cooking equipment? Unattended cooking is the leading factor in these fires. It’s important, while enjoying family time, that we keep our loved ones safe.

If your kids and grandkids would like to help, allow them to assist with prep before things get busy and crowded in the kitchen! Do so safely, allowing them to mix and measure ingredients, but



once the stove and oven are being used, keep younger kids out of the kitchen altogether. Even things like coffee and gravy can splash and cause serious burns!

As food preparation kicks into high gear, stay



If you decide to give a deep-fried turkey a try, it's important to follow these tips to keep your family safe:

- Keep fryers off decks, out of garages and away from your home.
- Thaw your turkey completely and dry thoroughly before immersing it in the oil.
- Do not leave the fryer unattended.
- Never operate a fryer in the rain or snow.
- Place the fryer on a level surface and never move it once it's in use.



in the kitchen, especially when cooking on the stovetop. Keep an eye on the turkey, too, and don't leave the home once it's in the oven.

When things get hectic, we tend to be less focused on safe behaviors. Make sure things like oven mitts, dish towels, wooden spoons, paper towels and food packaging are away from hot surfaces such as stovetop burners.

From everyone at the Burn Prevention Network, we wish you a happy and safe Thanksgiving and Holiday Season!



PLAYING WITH FIRE

“Isn’t experimenting with fire something all children do?”

“Boys will be boys.”

“It’s a phase he will grow out of.”

by a licensed Mental Health Professional to determine the child’s motivation behind the fire misuse. This is important to determine the best intervention. Motivations can range from curiosity, which can often be resolved with education, to “a cry for help”, which can necessitate more intensive professional mental health engagement in addition to prevention education.

We also provide a Home Safety Check by a fire service professional, follow up recommendations and fire safety/prevention education for the entire family to produce a more fire safe environment.

When families complete this program as suggested, we achieve a recidivism rate of less than 2%. The national recidivism rate for untreated inappropriate fire setting by youth is 65%!

Fire misuse is a dangerous behavior which left untreated can have devastating consequences. If you know of a youth who is participating in fire misuse, **let us know!** Our program is available in Lehigh, Northampton and Berks Counties for youth ages 7-17. All referrals and care maintain the strictest confidentiality.

While curiosity about fire is absolutely a natural part of child development, unsupervised experimentation with fire can have devastating outcomes! Curiosity about fire arises in children around the age of three, and that is when we need to start teaching them about the dangers of fire and its appropriate uses by adults.

When kids fall through the prevention cracks, and begin to “play” with lighters and matches, we need to switch to an interventional approach. The BPN’s “FYI” (Fire & Youth Intervention) program is designed to do just that. When a child is referred to our program, we provide, free of charge, an assessment



WALTER J. OKUNSKI, MD, FACS

July 10, 1937 – March 26, 2019

Walt Okunski had a way of announcing his presence when he entered a room. It had nothing to do with seeking attention or wishing to be noticed over others present. Walt's calling cards were his deep, resonant baritone voice and the smooth, faint aroma of cherry pipe tobacco that clung to his clothing. That, along with his warm smile, genuine interest in each person he encountered and sense of authority born of experience proclaimed humbly, "The Doctor is in the Room!"

Walt was on the forefront of the advancement of burn care in the U.S. and certainly here in the Greater Lehigh Valley. He did his internship at St. Joseph's Hospital in Syracuse, New York, surgical residency at Upstate Medical Center and his plastic surgery residency at Allentown General Hospital. He was chief of plastic surgery at the U.S. Naval Hospital St. Albans in Queens New York during the Vietnam War. This is where both Walt's

passion for burn care and his commitment to burn prevention took root.

Along with Leonard Pool, he founded and served as the first Medical Director of the Regional Burn Center at Lehigh Valley Hospital as well as many other leadership appointments to include: President of the Medical Staff; Chief Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery; and Director of Residency Program.

Walt played a critical role in founding the Burn Prevention Foundation as a spin-off of Burn Foundation headquartered in Philadelphia. He remained, throughout his career, an outspoken advocate for the importance of burn prevention as an essential component of the burn care team. It can be said, without exaggeration, that the Burn Prevention Network would not be here today had it not been for Walt Okunski's championship.

Walt continued to support, fund and participate in his beloved BPN until the very



June Okunski, B. Daniel Dillard, BPN executive director, and Walter J. Okunski, MD

end. We were blessed to have him and will continue to see his influence in our continued growth to come even when our memories of his deep voice and the lingering smell of his pipe tobacco begins to fade. Toward that end, the Burn Prevention Network has renamed the Phoenix Award to the Walter J. Okunski Phoenix Award. This prestigious recognition is annually awarded at the Valley Preferred Spirit of Courage celebration to an outstanding burn survivor who, like the mythical bird, rises out of the ashes to serve and guide fellow burn survivors on their healing journey.

CAMP SUSQUEHANNA 2020!

A place where children who have experienced burn injury can grow and realize their potential while having FUN!



Mark your calendars for Camp Susquehanna 2020
2020 Theme: **"BE THE CHANGE!"**


BURN
PREVENTION
NETWORK

Join the fight for a
world without burns.
Find out how at:

WWW.
BURNPREVENTION.ORG

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