

## AUTHORS' REPLY

Dear Sir,

The observation and comment by the author are appreciated. These studies support our suspicion that the pattern and severity of injury sustained by the motorcyclist can be explained. Prevention of severe lower limb fracture is probably impossible but can certainly be minimised. As the number of motorcyclists on the road is increasing, the incidence of road traffic accidents will undoubtedly increase. In Malaysia and other developing countries, as motorcycles are an important mode of transport, the mortality and morbidity associated with motorcyclists are a national issue that needs to be solved.

The higher incidence of the right leg (or the left leg in Nigeria) to be severely injured suggested that it needs extra protection. However, it should be stressed the importance of protecting the motorcyclist as a whole. Protecting the limb at risk is an effective way to minimise the injury severity. However the anatomy of the lower limbs makes the protection difficult.

A significant number of fatal injuries occur during festive seasons. In a recent report, more than half of 80 fatal accidents involved motorcyclists<sup>(1)</sup>. This happened despite intensive measures taken by the government to reduce the incidence of motor vehicle accidents (MVA). The motorcycle is a dangerous vehicle and its use should be re-evaluated. It is relatively light and unstable, and the passengers are generally exposed. The use of low engine capacity motorcycles on federal roads, for example, should not be allowed. The speed limit for the motorcycle should be controlled by a device that ensures that it does not exceed a maximum speed.

Safety consciousness among motorcyclists and other road users needs to be improved. A group of researchers in Thailand had recently invented a special helmet to be worn to enable the engine to be started<sup>(2)</sup>. Our government had initiated a television campaign to highlight the vulnerability of the motorcyclist to other heavy vehicles. On certain occasions, especially during festive seasons, heavy vehicles are not allowed to be on the road for certain hours<sup>(3)</sup>. A physical divider can be effective to prevent high impact head-to-head collision on two-way roads. This may explain the lowest incidence number of MVA on federal highways<sup>(1)</sup>. Teenagers should not be allowed to ride because of their behavioural complexity and immaturity.

Motorcyclists in Malaysia and Nigeria face similar risks when they ride on the road. They are at a higher risk of sustaining severe injuries when they are involved in MVA. If not fatal, they may sustain crippling injuries to either lower limb.

Yours sincerely,

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