

available, patients still require symptomatic treatment until such surgical solution can result in "a drug-free existence." The urgent admission for surgery he suggests might not always be possible, given the state of the health care environment.

Both pain specialists and surgeons should strive to work together in optimizing individual pain management. The development of hospital-based pain management initiatives and standards also calls for the active participation of all health care work-

ers involved. In many institutions, most surgeons are already on board.

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Snowmobile trauma, alcohol and the law: a reply

We thank Dr. Driedger for his letter to the editor (*Can J Surg* 2004;47(4):304) commenting on our article on snowmobile trauma in Manitoba (*Can J Surg* 2004;47(2):90-4), and would like to respond.

We are delighted to see that Dr. Driedger shares our concern that the operation of motor vehicles while intoxicated, be they snowmobiles, cars or watercraft, poses a grave risk not only to the vehicle operator but to many others. We strongly concur with his conclusion that the societal cost of such injuries is enormous.

The tragedy, of course, is that such injuries are wholly preventable.

Our comment, that trailside monitoring for intoxicated snowmobilers is likely to be ineffective, is based on our data that the great majority of accidents occurred while snowmobilers were travelling on unmarked trails. Therefore we agree with Dr. Driedger that perhaps our only effective policing of such a problem would be blood alcohol readings obtained when trauma patients are admitted to hospital.

As orthopedic surgeons, we see the carnage caused by intoxicated drivers far too often. We strongly support a change in legislation that would require testing of all trauma patients for blood alcohol upon admission to hospital, and that these results become admissible in court.

While this may be seen by some as an infringement of individuals' rights, the cost of vehicular crashes caused by intoxicated drivers far outweighs this concern.

We appreciate Dr. Driedger's comments. It is most important that we, as surgeons who deal with alcohol-related accidents, continue to add our voices to the public debate on these issues.

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