

Correspondence

Out-of-Control Snowboarders

TO THE EDITOR: Regarding the article by Terence M. Davidson, MD, and Aristotle L. Laliotis, MD, in the March 1996 issue of *THE WESTERN JOURNAL OF MEDICINE*,¹ an issue of skiing-related injuries that is neglected in this study is the unfortunate occurrence of skiers colliding with other persons. I have had a number of patients under my care who have been severely injured by collisions with out-of-control skiers and snowboarders. One man who was under my care was severely injured after being hit by an out-of-control snowboarder, causing a complex fracture of my patient's leg. The snowboarder in that instance was not hurt, but the snowboard was the instrument of injury.

I would be interested if Drs Davidson and Laliotis have any comments on the frequency of such injuries to bystanders caused by alpine skiers and snowboarders.

SAMUEL A. WISE, MD
3201 S Maryland Parkway, Ste 514
Las Vegas, NV 89109-2427

REFERENCE

1. Davidson TM, Laliotis AT: Snowboarding injuries—A four-year study with comparison with alpine ski injuries. *West J Med* 1996; 164:231-237

* * *

Dr Davidson Responds

TO THE EDITOR: The comments by Samuel A. Wise, MD, are appreciated. When snowboarders first entered the alpine ski slopes, many predicted an increase in the number of crashes based on the assumption that alpine skiers and snowboarders travel different courses at different speeds. This fear has not been realized, and in fact, snowboarders are now welcomed at most alpine ski resorts across the United States.

At Mammoth Mountain Ski Resort, there was no increase in the number of crashes between alpine skiers and snowboarders. This is not to say that collisions between skiers and snowboarders are not a problem. Collisions continue to occur, and unfortunately, in these accidents head and facial and more serious injuries are more frequent than with noncollision accidents. Most collisions are alpine skier to alpine skier.

The experience at Mammoth shows that collisions are a risk, and the alpine skiers should be focused on avoiding collisions with other alpine skiers.

There is a worthwhile adage that the ski patrol continually tries to teach—"Control is the goal." If all skiers followed this, the frequency of all types of collisions would decrease.

TERENCE M. DAVIDSON, MD
Division of Otolaryngology-
Head and Neck Surgery
University of California
Medical Center, San Diego
200 W Arbor Dr
San Diego, CA 92103-8895