Accidental Mechanical Asphyxia from a Window-Blind Cord

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To the Editor: We report the case of a 3-y 9-mo-old boy who sustained accidental mechanical asphyxia due to window-cord strangulation at home. On the evening of the accident, his mother retired to another room, stating later to the authorities that he was well at that time and watching television. Five minutes later, his mother found him unconscious and hanging by the neck from the open-ended window blind cord. He was unconscious and pale, and his father immediately started bystander cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), with return of spontaneous circulation 1 min after the initiation of CPR. There were obvious strangulation marks on the right side of his neck, and multiple petechiae on his face (Fig. 1a). After the accident, we asked his mother about the positioning of the household furniture. She admitted that window blind cords were near a couch and chair in the room. The height of the chair was 45 cm and the full length of the blind cord was 110 cm, which was long enough to easily wrap around his neck while climbing onto the chair (Fig. 1b). Approximately 25% of all deaths due to pediatric asphyxia in the United States are as a result of rope or cord strangulation [1]. Many of the strangulations occur in the home environment and are caused by accidental hanging from potentially dangerous objects such as window cords, children's toys, household furniture, and helmets [2, 3]. The injury alert issued by the Japan Pediatric Society, the Consumer Affairs Agency, and the Government of Japan reported 3 fatal and 6 non-fatal incidents from blind cord strangulation between 2011 and 2015. In June 2016, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development carried out a global awareness campaign on window covering cord safety [4]. It is unfortunate that this incident occurred even after these recommendations had been

made. Increased efforts directed at reducing the incidence of deaths are needed by increasing product safety and educating parents about potentially fatal hazards. It is necessary to establish strategies to avoid window-cord use, avoid the production of window-cords, and to encourage the production of window blinds that do not require cords.

Fig. 1 a. The strangulation injuries sustained after the accidental mechanical asphyxia from the window-blind cord (Black arrows). b. The full length of the cord indicating the potential for a strangulation injury to a toddler

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest None.

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