NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL℠

700 Children's Drive
Columbus, Ohio 43205-2696
nationwidechildrens.org

**N E W S  R E L E A S E**

Contact: Pam Barber/Mary Ellen Fiorino/Erin Pope
Nationwide Children's Hospital
Marketing and Public Relations
(614) 355-0495

**Embargoed For Release:**
**12:01 a.m. ET Monday, August 4, 2008**

# FIRST NATIONAL STUDY TO EXAMINE RECREATIONAL AND COMPETITIVE DIVING-RELATED INJURIES

*New study suggests the need for increased prevention to reduce diving injuries*

**(COLUMBUS, Ohio) –** The thrill of flipping and jumping into water has become common practice among children and adolescents as they dive into more than eight million swimming pools across the United States. Competitive divers strive to gracefully enter the water without making a splash however these athletes, including the future Beijing 2008 Olympians, are not immune to the increase in diving-related injuries over the past two decades. Not only are competitive divers at risk for injury, but recreational divers are also being treated in emergency departments for diving-related injuries.

A new study conducted by researchers at the Center for Injury Research and Policy (CIRP) of The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital, found that the most common injuries while diving were to the head, neck and face.

Published in the August issue of *Pediatrics*, study findings revealed that an estimated 111,000 diving-related injuries to persons under the age of 19 were treated in emergency departments from 1990 through 2006. Lacerations and soft tissue injuries were the most common diagnoses, representing more than 58 percent of all injuries. Collision with the diving board or platform was the leading cause of injury – the likelihood of collision with the diving board dramatically increased when a diver attempted a flip, handstand or backward dive.

"There is a need for increased prevention efforts to lower the risks of diving-related injuries among children and adolescents," explained study co-author Lara McKenzie, PhD, MA, principal investigator in CIRP at Nationwide Children's Hospital. "The recent growth of the sport of diving, coupled with the increasing complexity and difficulty of dives, has resulted in a greater potential for both competitive and recreational diving-related injuries."

"Based on our findings, the largest age group of injured divers was 10- to 14 year-olds," said study co-author Gary Smith, MD, DrPH, director of the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital, and an associate professor of pediatrics at The Ohio State University College of Medicine. "Although this group made up the largest number of injured divers, 10- to 19-years-olds were more at risk for an injury to the extremities. Boys were two times more likely to experience a head or neck injury or a fracture."

Recommended strategies for preventing diving-related injuries include educating divers about jumping into shallow water from the pool edge; placing visible depth indicators around the pool; constructing soft bottom pools; and removing obstacles from lakes, rivers and oceans. Also, the presence of a lifeguard or trainer, as well as teaching proper diving techniques could reduce the overall number of diving-related injuries.

"Parents, pediatricians, coaches, lifeguards and trainers need to be aware of the types of injuries seen during recreational and competitive diving, as well as the risk factors," said McKenzie, also an assistant professor at The Ohio State University College of Medicine.

Data for the study were collected from the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS), which is operated by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. The NEISS dataset provides information on consumer product-related and sports and recreation-related injuries treated in hospital emergency departments in the United States.

**The Center for Injury Research and Policy (CIRP) of The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital** works at the local to international levels to reduce death and disability due to injuries through research, education, advocacy and advances in clinical care. CIRP aims to improve the scientific understanding of the epidemiology, prevention, acute treatment, rehabilitation and biomechanics of injuries. CIRP educates health and other professionals, policy makers and the public regarding the importance of injuries, injury research and injury prevention. CIRP provides leadership in the development, implementation and scientific evaluation of public policy regarding control of injuries. Learn more about CIRP at http://www.injurycenter.org.

**-30-**