

Pokemon Go and the potential for increased accidents

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New research published by *Oxford Medical Case Reports* indicates that augmented reality games like Pokémon Go, while holding great promise to promote exercise, also increases the potential for distraction-related death.

The dramatic increase in smartphone adoption and computing power on ever more capable mobile computing platforms has been associated with a rise in reports of distraction-related injury and death. Recently, the layering of [augmented reality](#) information on top of smartphone applications has created further levels of user engagement and popularity. One augmented reality-based entertainment application, Pokémon Go, in which players use their phones' GPS systems to interact with virtual creatures that appear on the screen as if they were in same place as the players, has become the most rapidly downloaded game in history.

Researchers report two cases, presenting simultaneously to the [trauma center](#) at the University of Arizona, with injuries sustained secondary to gameplay with this augmented reality-based application.

Patient number 1, the driver of the pickup truck, was a 19-year-old man. Alert and oriented upon admission to the trauma center, he volunteered that while driving the truck he lost control at a speed of 40 miles per hour. He reported that he was 'hunting Pokémon' while driving and got distracted when he found one 'sitting across the road' in his direct path. Seeing this, he attempted to 'flick his Pokémon ball to capture the

Pokémon' and lost control of the vehicle, rolling it and ejecting three passengers from the bed of the truck.

In a second case, a 58-year-old woman involved in a single motor vehicle accident, came to the same trauma unit as the first case. She collided with a utility pole after swerving off the road to avoid hitting a pedestrian. She presented with severe pelvic pain and was found to have multiple pelvic fractures. Scene reports from bystanders and Emergency Medical Services indicated that the pedestrian was engaged in a game of Pokémon Go and had wandered into the middle of the street to catch a Pokémon.

Mobile entertainment applications like Pokémon Go have the commendable ability to promote increased exercise. Still other types of connected wearables have helped both consumers and clinicians dose activity much as we might dose a drug. But mobile and mobile-augmented reality applications can also promote distraction. These constitute among the first reports in the medical literature of an augmented reality application-related injury requiring acute intervention in a trauma center. Researchers look forward to future works that can better characterize and classify the most common types of injuries that may result from increased use and adoption.

"Our world is filled with digital distractions increasing at a near logarithmic rate—both in work and in play", notes coauthor David G. Armstrong, Professor of Surgery and Director of the University of Arizona's Southern Arizona Limb Salvage Alliance. "What we have to figure out as a society and, frankly, as a species, is how to dose these distractions to help make our lives better and not shorter."

More information: The paper "Potential perils of peri-Pokémon perambulation: the dark reality of augmented reality?" is available at: [dx.doi.org/10.1093/omcr/omw080](https://doi.org/10.1093/omcr/omw080)

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