

Research reveals electric scooter injury impacts in Darwin, Australia

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A Charles Darwin University (CDU), NT Health and Royal Darwin Hospital study revealed that electric scooter (e-scooter) injuries cost the health system more than \$350,000 over the eight-month study period in 2021 as a result of the introduction of a shared e-scooter service. Credit: Charles Darwin University

Injuries from electric scooters in Darwin have cost the medical system more than \$350,000 in eight months, according to a recently published research paper.

There was a significant injury toll with many patients experiencing [head](#)

[injuries](#) and limb injuries, a significant number of whom needed to be admitted to hospital. There were 24 patients who required operative intervention as a result of their injuries.

The paper was the result of a study into the impact on the Northern Territory health system, over an eight-month study period, since the introduction of the shared e-scooter scheme in Darwin City in January 2020.

Charles Darwin University (CDU) Lecturer in Psychology Dr. Timothy Piatkowski said the study looked at emergency department presentation as a result of injuries sustained by people using e-scooters.

"There were 111 case presentations to Royal Darwin and Palmerston Regional Hospital Emergency Departments at that time—105 patients in total, of which six patients represented as a result of their injuries," Dr. Piatkowski said.

"About half of those attending the [emergency department](#) were intoxicated with the average alcohol level being 0.18% of those tested. The highest was a staggering 0.49%."

Dr. Piatkowski said all those patients with injuries severe enough to stay at [hospital](#) were intoxicated.

The results of the study, which was a collaboration between CDU, NT Health and the Royal Darwin Hospital, were published in the journal *Emergency Medicine Australasia* this month.

Lead author Dr. James Moran, who works as an Emergency Medicine Specialist at Royal Darwin and Palmerston Regional Hospital Emergency Departments, said there were correlations between intoxication and the severity of the injuries sustained.

"Alcohol consumption is a significant issue in the NT and, according to the present data, may require further investigation when considered in conjunction with e-scooter services in the Top End," Dr. Moran said.

"The current data is supportive of the link between intoxication while riding scooters and increased [injury](#) severity which has also been described by similar studies in Australia and overseas."

Dr. Moran stated that while there are [potential benefits](#) to using e-scooters, recognition of the health and [financial impact](#) of this shared service in the NT is important.

Harm minimizations strategies targeting implementation of alcohol testing and penalties for riders may be able to reduce the effect of the introduction of e-scooters on the health system in the NT.

According to Dr. Piatkowski, almost all those people who went to Royal Darwin Hospital and Palmerston Hospital were on rented eScooters.

Dr. Piatkowski and Dr. Moran's research continues in this space, where they wish to reduce the burden of harm to the community. They will be continuing to explore ways to change policy accordingly.

More information: James Moran et al, Impact on the health service in the Top End, Northern Territory following the introduction of an electric scooter sharing service, *Emergency Medicine Australasia* (2022). [DOI: 10.1111/1742-6723.14090](https://doi.org/10.1111/1742-6723.14090)

Provided by Charles Darwin University

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