

Department of Surgery
2026 Research Day
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Title:

Swing and Miss? A 20-Year National Database Study of Pediatric Piñata-Related Injuries

Author(s) and Affiliations:

Jacob N. Bamberger, MD¹, Leah Samuels, BA², Yoli Meydan, BA², Seth J. Weir, DO¹, Richard Scriven, MD^{1,3}, Kristen Calabro, MD^{2,3}, Kenneth Gow, MD,MHA^{1,3}, Helen Hsieh, MD, PhD^{1,3}

1. Department of Surgery, Stony Brook University Hospital, Stony Brook, NY, 11794
2. Renaissance School of Medicine, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY, 11794
3. Department of Surgery, Division of Pediatric Surgery, Stony Brook University Hospital, Stony Brook, NY, 11794

Faculty Mentor(s):

Helen Hsieh, MD, PhD

Background:

Piñata parties are a celebratory activity often involving children. Anecdotal accounts of piñata-related trauma have been noted but data is limited. The objective of this study is to characterize piñata-related injuries to raise awareness and provide safety recommendations.

Methods:

We identified pediatric (≤ 21 years) piñata-related injuries with narrative text searches of “piñata,” relevant misspellings and synonyms of National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS) data from 2005-2024. Cases were manually reviewed to identify injury mechanism, object causing injury, injured individual, self-inflicted status, and injury. Patient demographic, piñata related injury patterns, and temporal trends were analyzed. Age-based comparisons were made using Chi-square and Fisher's exact tests.

Results (or Preliminary Results):

Four-hundred-four pediatric patients were identified (mean \pm SD, 7.9 ± 4.2 years), representing a national estimate of $\sim 10,268$ cases. Most injuries occurred in craniofacial regions (64%) and 26% were classified as severe (i.e., closed head injuries, fractures, and concussions). The most common injuries were lacerations (33%), contusions (16%), and closed head injuries (16%). Most injuries (78%) resulted from being struck by an object. Metal or wooden bats and sticks were associated with increased injury severity. Children ≤ 10 years had significantly more craniofacial injuries, while older children experienced more fractures and sprains.

Conclusions (or Preliminary Conclusions):

Piñata-related traumas are associated with a notable burden of injury. Piñata-related pediatric injuries resemble those seen in stick and bat-based sports. Younger children were more likely to sustain craniofacial injuries. These data highlight the need for safety measures and supervision during piñata celebrations.