UPPER LIMB INJURIES

in Snowdonia mountain casualties

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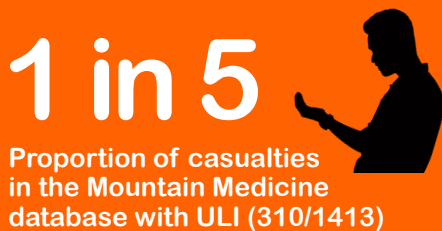Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor
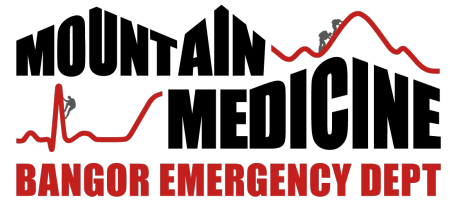
Snowdonia National Park attracts a greater proportion of outdoor pursuits visitors than any other UK National Park.

For physically active individuals, upper limb injuries (ULIs) can have a profound and lasting impact on their chosen activity and lifestyle. We wished to ascertain the nature and epidemiology of ULIs in mountain casualties brought to our hospital.
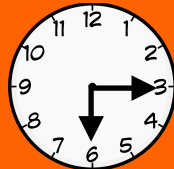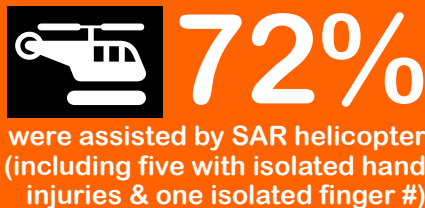
Method

- We interrogated our database of all casualties brought to the ED from mountain locatioons/activity following contact with Mountain Rescue Teams (MRT) and/or Search & Rescue Helicopter January 2004 - April 2017.

- MRT casualty-care records, ED notes and (where applicable) radiology and post-mortem reports were scrutinised.

- There were 1413 casualties on the database in total at time of analysis.

1 in 5
Proportion of casualties in the Mountain Medicine database with ULI (310/1413)

72%
were assisted by SAR helicopter (including five with isolated hand injuries & one isolated finger #)

2M:1F
Male:Female ratio 205:105

Most incidents leading to ULI occur in the **afternoon**

Activity at time of injury

Half of all ULI were sustained whilst hill-walking (155/310), 58 rock-climbing and 42 scrambling. The remainder were sustained during an array of outdoor pursuits, plus three cases of self-harm.
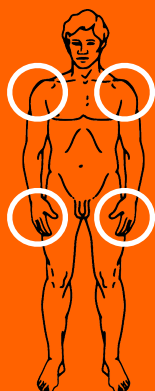
Most of the hill-walkers were descending at time of injury (we see the same pattern in LL injuries)

12 fatalities
had an ULI amongst injuries found on PM: 10 fallers from height, and two suicides

RIP

ISOLATED ULIs:

SHOULDER DISLOCATIONS were the most common isolated upper limb injury (31/118, 26%)

INJURED MOST OFTEN*:

SHOULDER GIRDLE & WRIST/HAND were injured most often. There were very few elbow injuries (7%)

SOFT TISSUE INJURIES

= predominant injury type (132/353, 37% of ULIs in the series)

*excluding minor soft tissue injuries