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Ski Injuries

It's a foggy morning on top of Granite Peak. A skier clicks on his skis and heads down the hill. Before he knows it, he is airborne and the ground is coming up fast. He then thinks to himself "this is going to hurt." This skier was my grandpa. Although skiing is a very exhilarating sport, ski injuries are much more common than you might think. Ski patrol teams play a crucial role in maintaining the safety of skiers by promptly responding to accidents and providing medical assistance. This essay will discuss the most common ski injuries as well as how ski patrol mitigates these injuries and then respond to these injuries to keep these skiers as safe as possible.

Skiing injuries include a vast range of conditions, including fractures, head and spinal injuries, dislocations, and soft tissue damage, which show the importance of ski patrol's nearly immediate and effective response. One common type of injury is fractures, which can occur in various bones, particularly the lower body with bones such as the tibia, fibula, and ankle(Edward). When interviewing my grandpa he talked about his most recent ski accident. He suffered many fractures including, "7 or 8 fractured ribs on the right side, and what really surprised me is the x-rays showed I had two fractures of my pelvis." These fractures are also more common than one might think. Rib injuries can happen doing jumps but also running into things. In my grandpa's case, he went airborne over a jump he didn't see causing him to land on his side, giving him these injuries. The pelvis injury is also fairly common in skiing because of the risk of falling from tall heights when going over jumps. In addition to fractures, skiers are

also at risk of sprains(Edward). These sprains happen most often in the joints such as the knees and ankles, resulting from sudden stops or movements. Head injuries pose another significant risk, these can happen during high speed collisions or falls. Head injuries can include concussions or more traumatic brain injuries that can lead to lifelong effects(Edward). Helmets can play a crucial role in keeping a skier safe while on the hill. As mentioned previously my grandpa, Chuck Pease, has been involved in a ski accident before, in his case multiple. When I interviewed him about them he said, “I wore a helmet both times and both times they broke, they saved my noggin.” This proves that without ski helmets in these accidents he could have been injured much worse. Similarly, skiing accidents can also cause spinal injuries, which can range from minor tweaks to severe damage that can affect someone for the rest of their life.

Dislocations are also very common. These injuries most commonly occur in the shoulder, elbow, or fingers(Edward). Furthermore, skiing places significant stress on muscles, tendons, and ligaments, making soft tissue injuries like strains, tears, and contusions common occurrences(Edward). Given the frequency of ski injuries as well as their severity, ski patrol teams play a crucial role keeping skiers safe while enjoying the snow.

Ski patrol teams are essential to the safety of skiers at any snow resort. Ski patrollers have one main job: keep skiers safe. However, this job is easier said than done. Ski patrollers have many jobs that they do to keep these people safe. One job they have is to patrol the ski hill(Patroller 101). Ski patrollers ski just like anyone else until there is an injury reported. Then these patrollers snap into action and quickly get to the injury scene. When interviewing a ski patroller at Granite Peak, Adam Krasowski, he informed me that, “We arrive at the scene within 3 minutes. When an incident is reported it’s go time, and whoever the slope leader sends arrives to the scene promptly.” This is a surprisingly fast response while considering an injury could

happen anywhere on the hill. When I asked Adam about the procedure for when an injury happens he gave me a well informed answer. A summary of the process is that first the slope leader, incident commander, sends out a message to all ski patrollers on the radio. Whoever arrives on the scene first is known as the “primary responder” and is in charge of letting the incident commander know that they have arrived as well as assessing the patient and calling for any supplies or extra manpower that is needed for the injury. Once backup arrives, the injured skier is taken to the lower patrol room and given a further evaluation. After the evaluation the skier is given further medical treatment, sent to the hospital in an ambulance, or even sent home if the injuries are not considered to be severe. This question prompted me to ask a follow up question. I asked where on the ski hill injuries are most common. Adam said, “A study at Granite Peak done by a group of medical students called the ‘Cranium Crew’ found that twice as many incidents occur in terrain parks. The reality is, incidents can happen anywhere. From the parking lot, to the chalet, to the lift lines, to the slopes.” This may not surprise many people, but even with this in mind it doesn’t veer many people away from these terrain parks which further proves the importance of ski patrol. Overall when talking about his accidents, my grandpa said, “the ski patrol were very professional and careful in both of my accidents...” Ski patrollers play one of, if not the most, important roles in keeping the ski hill safe. Without these people willing to go through hours of training and rigorous tests, the safety of any ski hill would be at a severe risk and would limit many people from doing a winter sport they love.

Although there are many dangers to skiing, the benefits outweigh the risks for many people which is why ski patrollers are essential to keeping the mountain safe for everyone to enjoy one of winter's best sports. When asking my grandpa if after his ski accidents he would continue skiing he said, “Yes I skied twice this week.” This further proves my point that skiing is

an exhilarating sport and once someone does it once it is hard to get them away from it, even if they have been in severe accidents like my grandpa.

Works Cited

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