Motorcycle study aims to get full picture

A Victorian university has been commissioned to compare the experiences of riders injured in crashes at specific sites with those who come out safely

The safety of motorcyclists will be the focus of a comprehensive investigation into factors contributing to crashes, with the 18-month study to be conducted by a team of scientists and investigators from Monash University's Accident Research Centre (MUARC).

The study will compare the experiences of riders injured in crashes at specific sites with riders who have travelled through the same site safely. Factors to be investigated include travel speed, rider profile, the behaviour of other road users and the physical environment.

“We know that speed is a factor that determines the severity of a crash, but we have less information about the role that it plays in causing a crash, particularly whether there is any interaction between travel speed and other factors, like rider experience, and crash causation,” said Dr Lesley Day, who is heading up the study.

“We also know that motorcycle riders are a vulnerable group for injury and, given an increase in the number of motorcycle riders it is important to conduct this study into contemporary risk factors within the Victorian context and the contributions these factors make to crashes.”

Injured riders admitted to hospitals in Victoria will be directly approached by researchers. To select a control rider, MUARC researchers will photograph number plates and record the speed of riders passing safely through the site. VicRoads will then contact riders directly to invite them to participate. Speed data will not be provided to VicRoads or used for any enforcement activity.

Consenting riders will be asked about travel speed, their riding experiences and habits, and the behaviour of other road users. In addition, injured riders will also be asked about any other factors that may have contributed to the crash. Experienced and active riders have contributed to the questionnaire design to ensure relevance and improve study outcomes.

“The study aims to provide evidence-based information to riders and the wider community and to help road safety organisations make better decisions. Ultimately, the study is about helping to improve rider safety and reducing the number and seriousness of motorcycle crashes,” Dr Day said.

The study is being funded by the Australian Research Council, VicRoads, Victoria Police, TAC, Department of Justice, and VACC. Results are expected towards the end of 2013.

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