

Tim Feyma, M3  
“Caring for the Underserved” Project Summary.

Community resource investigated: Swimming Lessons

Justification:

Drowning is the second most common cause of injury death in the pediatric population (aged 0 to 14 or 19 years depending on the source) in the United States. The majority of drownings (60-90%) involve swimming pools, while up to 10% occur in a bathtub. Despite the frequency of this problem, physicians most often do not provide routine guidance on drowning prevention. A study of physicians via questionnaire in the Los Angeles, CA region involving 325 physicians showed that only 33% of physicians counseled patients regularly regarding drowning prevention. Similarly, only 33% of physicians included knew that injury deaths attributable to drowning were more common than those attributable to toxic ingestions and firearm injuries in young children. Though low, these numbers are an improvement from those found via a survey performed by the American Academy of Pediatrics that found only 4.1% of surveyed members that were actively involved in community and/or legislative efforts to prevent childhood drowning. In the same study only 17.9% of the participants reported receiving formal education on drowning prevention during their pediatric residency training.

In trying to lessen the incidence of drowning, it is important to remember that 69% of drowning victims were being supervised by one or both parents while in a bath tub or pool, and that a lapse of supervision occurred for only a few minutes. One of the many preventive actions that might be undertaken to prevent drowning is to have a child take swimming lessons. While not recommended for children under 4 years old, the cost to provide lessons for an appropriately aged child can be prohibitive for some (although the charge would be less than the mean cost of \$13,215 for children admitted to hospitals in Los Angeles for near drowning experiences in 1999). Some community resources exist that help defray the cost of swimming lessons.

Sources:

- 1) Barkin SB, Gelberg L. Sink or Swim – Clinicians Don’t Often Counsel on Drowning Prevention. *Pediatrics*. 104 (5); Nov 1999, 1217-1219.
- 2) CDC Website: [www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/drown.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/drown.htm)
- 3) O’Flaherty JE, Pirie PL. Prevention of Pediatric Drowning and Near-drowning: A Survey of Members of the American Academy of Pediatrics. *Pediatrics*. 99 (2); Feb 1997, 169-174.

In talking to a family with 3 children (ages 3, 5, 8) at MCHC, I found that the children had not attended swimming lessons. As cost seemed to be a bit prohibitive, I investigated the cost of swimming lessons at different pools and informed the mother via telephone of available options.

1) **MSCR (Madison School & Community Recreation)** offers 8 weeks of swimming lessons for \$22. They do not provide scholarships for low-income families, but offer the lowest fee around. For more information call 204-3025, or investigate the website at [www.msqr.org](http://www.msqr.org)

2) The **YMCA** offers swimming lessons for non-members at \$62 for an 8-week session, or \$42 for a 5-week session. The prices are halved for YMCA members. The YMCA offers scholarships for low-income families (the forms can be picked up at the front desk of the East or West YMCA) to either become members, or take reduced price lessons as non-members. In talking to the aquatics director for the West YMCA, I was informed that non-members who apply for swimming lessons often are offered a 50-60% discount on prices. For the most accurate up to date information call 276-6606 or visit the website [www.ymcadanecounty.org](http://www.ymcadanecounty.org).

3) Swim West offers 12 weeks of swimming lessons for the reasonable price of \$135. They do not offer rebates to low-income families. They were also very rude to the author when he called to ask about possible scholarships for his fictional 7-year-old daughter. For more information call 831-6829, or check out their website [www.swimwest.com](http://www.swimwest.com).

## DROWNING IS THE #2 CAUSE OF DEATH FOR KIDS AGED 0-14 YEARS OLD<sup>1</sup>.

Help your child be prepared. If your child is older than 3, swimming lessons in Madison are available:

**MSCR (Madison School & Community Recreation)** offers 8 weeks of swimming lessons for **\$22**. Classes start in January, February, March, June, July, and September. For more information call **204-3025**, or visit the website: <http://www.madison.k12.wi.us/mscr/>

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