

# Letters to the Editor

## Recreational diving fatality statistics

Dear Editor,

In my commentary on children and scuba diving,<sup>1</sup> I made mention of Monaghan's fatality statistics for recreational scuba diving, indicating 16.7–18 deaths per 100,000 divers.<sup>2,3</sup> He is not alone in this assessment, demonstrating a significant death rate well in excess of that sometimes promoted by the recreational diving industry.

The British Sub-Aqua Club have averaged 15 deaths per 100,000 divers over the last two decades and also during the year 2000.<sup>4</sup> Japanese data indicate 17.5 per 100,000.<sup>5</sup> PADI, in its Australian manual, states that there is no specific trend up or down in scuba deaths, but that PADI certified divers, thereby excluding those under training, have a death rate of 2.1 per 10,000 (21 per 100,000).<sup>6</sup>

The statistics can be made to look better than they are by over-inflating the denominator and multiple counting of those divers with multiple certifications. The diving industry has total control over the supply of certification numbers and has been forced to revise downwards these denominators in the past. To overcome this effect, investigators now measure the death rate per dive, as was also done by Monaghan. The rationale for this was recently argued in this journal.<sup>7</sup>

The death rate per dive has been found to be 3.0 (West coast of USA), 2.05 (Canada) and 2.9 (UK) per 100,000 dives.<sup>7-9</sup> If one assumes that the average diver dives 10 times per year (less than the figure of 15 usually used), the death rate per diver is between 20 and 30 per 100,000.

Perhaps Monaghan was too conservative. Scuba is a beautiful but hazardous sport.

Carl Edmonds

Manly, NSW, 2095, Australia

**E-mail:** <puddle@bigpond.net.au>

### References

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### Key words

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### DIVING HISTORICAL SOCIETY

#### AUSTRALIA, SE ASIA

All enquiries to:  
Diving Historical Society  
Australia, SE Asia,  
PO Box 2064,  
Normansville, SA 5204,  
Australia

**Phone:** +61-(0)8-558-2970

**Fax:** +61-(0)8-558-3490

**E-mail:** <bramsay@iaccess.com.au>

## The Poetry Doctor

John Parker

Many Society members will know Dr John Parker from his books on diving medical assessment. The Editor, following Dr Wilkinson's effort in the last issue, asked John if he would contribute regularly a poem on diving. In return, he has asked that I draw readers' attention to his web site <[www.thepoetrydoctor.com](http://www.thepoetrydoctor.com)>.

### Mind Bends

When I go diving I feel I'm reviving  
By finding such wonder and peace.  
I flee my life's stresses and recurring duresses  
In this wonderful, watery release.  
Whilst exhaling my bubbles, I blow out my troubles  
To surface and leave me alone,  
Whilst I stay descended, suspended, up-ended  
Relaxed in a worryless zone.  
I drift with the flow, my thoughts deep in tow,  
Freed to roam in the stillness,  
But will my thoughtful descent cause my mind to get bent  
And suffer "contemplation illness"?