Fatal pediatric head injuries caused by short-distance falls

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Addendum

This death was reported to and investigated by the CPSC after the manuscript was submitted. *Case #19.* A 7-year-old boy was playing at a school playground, hanging by his hands from the gymnastic rings of a wooden play structure with his feet 30 inches above the ground. Another child grabbed him by the legs, forcing him to let go, and he fell face-first onto 7 inches of wood mulch, which had been placed on the playground surface the day before. The fall was witnessed by several other children and adults. He initially cried but did not appear to be seriously injured, and continued playing. However, 10-15 minutes later he complained of a headache and went to the school nurse’s office to lay down. He had a seizure and lost consciousness while in the office, was transported to a local hospital, then transferred to a tertiary care children’s hospital. A CT scan indicated acute occipito-parietal subdural hemorrhage, extending along the tentorium and posterior interhemispheric fissure. The hematoma was emergently evacuated, but he had a cardiopulmonary arrest in the operating room and could not be resuscitated. A postmortem examination indicated a small residual subdural hematoma at the base of the skull. He had no impact injury in his scalp, consistent with the history of a face-first fall, and had no facial lacerations, abrasions or fractures. The neck and cervical spinal cord were normal. The eyes were not examined.