

Buggy Safety In Amish Community

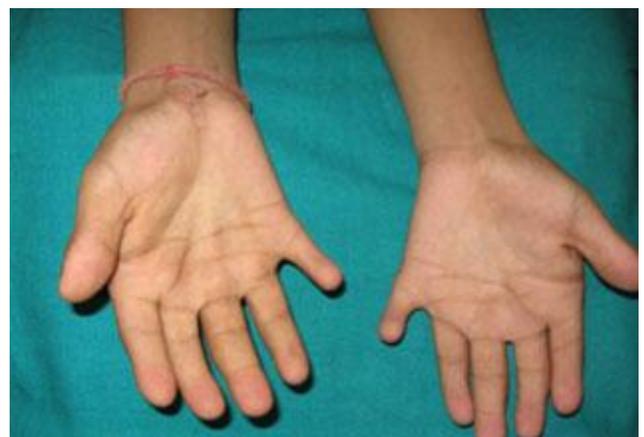
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Abstract: Although the Amish are admired for their lifestyle and religious beliefs, there are some health issues that exist in the Amish community because of the isolation that is a strict part of their beliefs. According to the Journal of Pediatrics and Child Health, (Payne et al), there is a database for these genetic diseases that users can access to find out the different genetic disorders common to the Anabaptist groups. Some of these genetic disorder diseases that are more common among the Amish are Polydactyl, extra fingers and toes, which is a symptom of Ellis-Van Creveld Syndrome and is common among the Amish of Pennsylvania. In addition, the primary mode of transportation in the Amish community has been the horse and buggy for generations. Today, traffic in the Amish community is increasing due to an increased rural population and a growing tourist industry. The community and the Amish have worked together on a committee to implement methods of marking all horse drawn vehicles with safety symbols to control the number of accidents that occur between horse drawn vehicles and motor vehicles.

Introduction

For the three hundred years that the Amish have lived in the United States, their lives have been centered on agriculture. This rural living reinforces the Amish beliefs that growing their food and livestock is communing with nature and cooperating with God's will. Agriculture is not just a job but a life that is dictated by the scriptures. Farming is such an integral part of the Amish way of life that at one time a person could be forced to excommunicate from the church if they did not earn a living by farming. Because the Amish population nearly doubles every twenty years, there has been an ever increasing demand put on the need for more farm land, and this land is getting more difficult to find which has caused the Amish men to look for work in nearby factories. They feel that this type of work goes against the life that the Amish have held sacred for hundreds of years because the Amish life is designed for the entire family to work side-by-side on the farm which bonds and solidifies the family and perpetuates their faith. The Amish know that by taking jobs outside of the Amish community, they can be influenced by the other lifestyles and choices. Many Amish families have begun to survive from cottage industries, and as many as 50% of the men are now working in these jobs which include selling Amish goods in stores and working as carpenters and builders. There are taboos and restrictions on what kind of goods that the Amish can sell and these include jewelry, real estate or electronics. Today there are many factors that can be obstacles in maintain the traditional Amish way of life such as families needing medical attention for very serious medical diseases and maintaining the horse and buggy way of transportation on roads dominated by cars and trucks (The Amish Way of Life 2015). Although the Amish are admired for their lifestyle and religious beliefs, there are some health issues that exist in the Amish community because of the isolation that is a strict part of their beliefs. It is important to know the background and history of the Amish people to understand why they are plagued by certain genetic diseases that occur with greater frequency and numbers than are present in the general population of the United States. During the Protestant Reformation in Europe during the 1600s, many religions were persecuted by the Catholic Church for their beliefs that were different from the Catholics. This forced the Anabaptist, which the Amish are part of, to flee to North America. The Amish community in New England began with 200 founders. Most of the Amish community today are descendants from the original 200 founders. Because the Amish are an isolated community and marry within their community, they have a very limited gene pool which leads

to having more than the average number of genetic abnormalities (Payne, Ruper, Siu, Siu 2011). According to the Journal of Pediatrics and Child Health, (Payne et al), there is a database for these genetic diseases that users can access to find out the different genetic disorders common to the Anabaptist groups. At least 10% of the Amish population has left the order and now have carried the gene disorders into the general population (Payne 2011). Many of these disorders originated in European countries where the Anabaptist lived before coming to Northern America. Some of these genetic disorder diseases that are more common among the Amish are Polydactyl, extra fingers and toes, which is a symptom of Ellis-Van Creveld Syndrome and is common among the Amish of Pennsylvania. When parents who are from a close gene source marry, children inherit two copies of a particular recessive gene and that is what leads to a genetic disease. Ellis-Van Creveld Syndrome, a type of dwarfism also involves abnormalities such as holes in the heart (PBS). According to DNA Science Blog, (Lewis 2013), in 1989, Dr. Morton found glutaric acid, the hallmark of an extremely rare inherited disease in a urine sample of a boy that had cerebral palsy. Most of these genetic diseases came from European subcultures. The gene was actually identified in 2011, and then dietary treatments were invented that balances two types of amino acids to counteract the metabolic glitch.



Ellis van Creveld Disease showing hands with six fingers.



Many children with Ellis van Creveld disease have dental abnormalities.

Dr. Morton is the founder of the Clinic for Special Children which was built with funds from the Amish community and is located on Stoltzfus family farm. It is run without electricity and modern machinery, and there is a strong reliance on other sources of power. The clinic sees 2,300 children with 140 recessive disorders and 500 adults with these disorders (Lewis 2013). It is unusual for the Amish community to want to seek outside people and buildings other than their own to be built on their land, but the community has embraced this clinic. Because the Amish have no health care insurance and only rely on their own resources or those of the church community, the clinic is the only way that they can have affordable care for their children with genetic diseases. The individual and the church community can only bear so much financial burden, and it becomes too expensive for the church community to afford care for extremely sick children (Garu 2012). When the expense of a seriously disabled child becomes more than the community can handle, many parents decide to forgo medical treatment. Some of the ways that the children's clinic affordable and looks for ways to cure children of genetic diseases:

1. Newborn screenings
2. Molecular diagnosis
3. Pediatric treatments
4. In house labs to reduce the cost of sending lab work out.

All of these methods can be used to find ways to treat children with Amish genetic disorders. If genetic diseases are found early in the newborn stage, the children will have a chance to receive treatment that could keep the disease from progressing. I would also recommend that the Amish couples should be required to have genetic testing before marriage. This would at least let the Amish couple know if they are potentially having children with genetic diseases. It is heart breaking to see families who are have children with disabilities, and it is not really fair to bring children in the world that have to live with such horrible deformities and retardation. There has to be a way to stop the cycle of people with the same recessive genes marrying each other. If possible, the Amish should look for ways to introduce new

people that do not have the same recessive genes into the community.

Amish Buggy Safety

The primary mode of transportation in the Amish community has been the horse and buggy for generations. Today, traffic in the Amish community is increasing due to an increased rural population and a growing tourist industry. The community and the Amish have worked together on a committee to implement methods of marking all horse drawn vehicles with safety symbols to control the number of accidents that occur between horse drawn vehicles and motor vehicles. The committee has created a standardized system of marking the Amish buggies so that everyone will recognize the buggies from a distance. This is the triangle that is on the back of buggies that indicates a vehicle that travels 25 mph or less. The fluorescent orange triangle can be seen in the daylight up to 1,000 feet. 9 out of 10 buggies that are hit from the rear happen during the daylight hours. On the outside of the fluorescent triangle is a reflective border that can be seen at night. . Some Amish communities in the New York area have been encouraged to follow new recommendations by state and local government to add more reflective markings and better lighting for the Amish buggies, According to an article in July 2015 in the Watertown Daily Times of Lawrence County, New York, (Newman 2015), state senator Patricia.



A. Richie and Sheriff Kevin M. Wells have recommended that the amount of reflective tape that is used on the Amish Buggies be increased from the present 72 square inches to 144 square inches. Also, it is recommended that the Amish buggies increase the quality of the required left headlight and paint the inside of the headlight white to reflect more light. These new recommendations will be voluntary because the Amish are following existing laws. The Amish leaders asked Sheriff to work with them until they are able to upgrade the red lanterns and add more lighting (Newman 2015). Stated in a doctoral paper by Cory Anderson of Ohio State University, the history of the fluorescent triangle dates back to 1963 when it was developed by the Ohio State

University to increase safety for Amish Buggies on the roads. The triangle design was chosen over other designs because the large triangle can be seen in the daylight and at night. However, when it was first introduced to the Amish community, it was rejected by the Old Order Amish as not in accordance with the plain and humble way that the Amish live. The color was too bright. There are still some Old Order Amish communities that have compromised with the state of Ohio to not follow the recommendations to use reflective signs on the buggies. By 1971, over 50 states in the United States have adopted legislation mandating the use of S.M.V signs and reflective tape. In 1987, the state of Ohio formally adopted legislation that permits exemptions for Amish that are religiously opposed to using the triangle safety emblem. However, Amish people move to different states that do enforce using the safety emblem and then they must follow new buggy safety laws in that state (Anderson 2014).

Strategies for Amish Buggy Safety:

Amish should be required to follow moving vehicle laws the same as any motorist. Because, the safety of the Amish traveler is just as important as the motor vehicle drivers. If a person at 16 or older wants to drive on the road in the United States, he/she will have to pass a driving test, and drive a vehicle that has working lights and turn signals. Then, if this is the case with motor vehicle laws, any vehicle that travels the roads should have strict safety laws. The most important thing is road safety for everyone, and no group or individual should dictate their own safety regulations. All Americans should follow strict road safety guidelines and laws. Just as the law requires car seats for infants and children in every state, and it not left up to the parent to decide if he/she wants to use one, so should the road safety laws be enforced by the government to all moving transportation on the roads including the Amish buggies. There should be strict punishment to any Amish buggy driver who does not follow the safety regulations. If they knew they would be given a ticket for violations just as motor vehicle drivers, they would comply with the law. LED lights should be added to the buggies. They could use these without electricity, and also it should be enforced that they use them.

Conclusion

To minimize the health problems in Amish community there should be implementation of new plans and strategies. The Amish couples should be required to have genetic testing before marriage. This would at least let the Amish couple know if they are potentially having children with genetic diseases. Also, the most important thing is road safety for everyone, and no group or individual should dictate their own safety regulations. All Americans should follow strict road safety guidelines and laws.

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