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## Invited Commentary Death or Severe Injury at the Ball Game

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Recently, spectators during Major League Baseball (MLB) games at Fenway Park in Boston, MA and Turner Field in Atlanta, GA died or were severely injured under circumstances that would not have been foreseen (3). Since then, the MLB has recommended that all teams lengthen their ballparks' safety netting in order to offer more fan protection (4). This suggests that an under-recognized public health risk may exist for the general community in attendance at sporting events despite their substantial popularity as recreational destinations. However, records of fatalities or injuries to MLB spectators are limited to anecdotal reports (2,3), and a publically available centralized registry does not exist. To bridge this knowledge gap, we conducted a comprehensive Internet search for injuries to spectators at MLB games from 2009 to 2014, and distributed an ethics board-approved survey to MLB team representatives to understand current practices for cataloguing fan injuries.

We identified through publically available media reports 33 MLB spectators injured at 20 different venues (age range 4–69 yr; 15% < 13 yr; 64% male), including 6 (18%) fatalities and 27 (82%) non-fatal injuries (Table). All fatalities were primarily a consequence of traumatic brain injury from blunt head trauma. Injuries involving trauma to the face or skull also occurred in the majority of non-fatal events (N=20), including skull fracture (N=7), traumatic brain injury (N=4), and retinal detachment (N=1). We observed in this cohort that death or injury was caused by a foul ball (39%), fall (27%), stray baseball bat (15%), or violent assault (6%). For the survey, of 30 team representatives contacted, 63% did not return communications despite multiple correspondences. Furthermore, of the 11 contacted successfully, 7 declined to answer survey questions citing legal reasons, team policy, or disinterest, while none of the 4 teams that acknowledged official record keeping of fan injuries were willing to disclose any further information.

Serious or fatal injury to spectators at MLB games is likely to be uncommon, although we believe that the true incidence of these events is greater than this report suggests (1–3). Nonetheless, the potential for death and serious injury to fans at MLB games constitutes an important risk of recreational activities. The leisurely setting, family-friendly marketing, and access to alcohol at professional sporting events may deceive spectators to the potentially

serious hazards of attendance. We believe that systematic surveillance of these events through an injury registry (5), as well as enhanced awareness among fans regarding the risks associated with game attendance, is likely to help preserve safety for fans and the sanctity of the game.

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**Table**

Major League Baseball (MLB) fan injuries from 2009 to 2014 reported in the popular media

Case	Stadium	Date	Age (yr)	Sex	Fatality	Injury	Mechanism
1.	Marlins Park	June 29, 2014	N/A	M	N	Facial injury	Hit by foul ball, striking two fans
2.	Marlins Park	June 29, 2014	N/A	F	N	Facial injury	Hit by foul ball, striking two fans
3.	Miller Park	June 3, 2014	N/A	M	N	Contusions	Fall over wall in outfield
4.	Turner Field	May 20, 2014	8	M	N	Head injury	Hit by foul ball
5.	Fenway Park	May 16, 2014	22	F	N	Head injury, spine injury, and facial fractures	Fall two stories down an elevator shaft
6.	Yankee Stadium	April 29, 2014	N/A	F	N	Facial injury	Hit by foul ball
7.	Oriole Park at Camden Yards	August 2013	10	F	N	Skull and facial fractures	Hit by foul ball
8.	Turner Field	July 16, 2013	30	M	Y	Head injury	Suicidal jump off railing
9.	Fenway Park	August 6, 2012	N/A (child)	M	N	Facial contusion	Hit by ground foul ball
10.	Petco Park	July 9, 2012	N/A	M	N	Shoulder contusion	Hit by foul ball
11.	Coors Field	May 5, 2012	20	F	N	N/A injury	Hit by foul ball
12.	Coors Field	April 9, 2012	69	F	N	Concussion	Hit by foul ball
13.	Comerica Park	October 12, 2011	N/A	M	N	N/A injuries	Fall through fence on railing
14.	Yankee Stadium	July 30, 2011	N/A	M	N	Facial injuries	Hit by foul ball
15.	Globe Life Park in Arlington	July 7, 2011	39	F	Y	Head injury	Fall over railing in left field reaching for ball tossed by outfielder
16.	Coors Field	May 24, 2011	27	M	Y	Head injury	Fall after sliding down a staircase
17.	Kauffman Stadium	April 29, 2011	4	F	N	Skull fracture	Hit by foul ball
18.	Kauffman Stadium	March 31, 2011	64	F	N	Facial fractures	Hit by broken bat
19.	Dodger Stadium	March 31, 2011	42	M	N	Disabling brain injury	Assault
20.	Fenway Park	September 9, 2010	N/A	M	N	Facial injury	Hit by foul ball
21.	Chase Field	September 6, 2010	13	M	N	Head injury	Hit by flying bat
22.	Citi Field	August 19, 2010	N/A	M	N	Facial contusion	Hit by flying bat
23.	Fenway Park	August 18, 2010	21	M	N	Brain injuries and facial fractures	Fall over staircase railing
24.	Tropicana Field	July 30, 2010	47	M	N	Facial laceration	Hit by broken bat
25.	Great American Ballpark	July 7, 2010	N/A	F	N	Facial injury	Hit by broken bat
26.	Globe Life Park in Arlington	July 6, 2010	25	M	N	Skull and extremity fractures	Fall off railing trying to catch a foul ball
27.	Dodger Stadium	June 2, 2010	N/A	F	N	Scalp laceration	Hit by broken bat

Case	Stadium	Date	Age (yr)	Sex	Fatality	Injury	Mechanism
28.	Turner Field	May 30, 2010	6	F	N	Multiple skull fractures and N/A brain injury	Hit by foul ball
29.	Miller Park	April 25, 2010	51	M	Y	Head injury	Fall over wall in outfield reaching for ball during batting practice just prior to the game
30.	Citizen's Bank Park	July 25, 2009	22	M	Y	Traumatic brain injury, spinal injury, and intra-abdominal injury	Assault
31.	Busch Stadium	June 26, 2009	34	M	N	Superficial contusions and shoulder injury	Fall over railing, possibly after syncope
32.	Kauffman Stadium	September 2009	53	M	N	Detached retina	Hit by hot dog thrown by mascot
33.	Angel Stadium of Anaheim	April 6, 2009	27	M	Y	Head injury	Assault