

## The inherent risks of texting while driving or walking: A report of a near calamity averted

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International Journal of Frontiers in Life Science Research, 2022, 03(02), 007–010

Publication history: Received on 04 September 2022; revised on 11 October 2022; accepted on 14 October 2022

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53294/ijflsr.2022.3.2.0065>

### Abstract

It is a relatively common thing to see young people texting on their phones while walking or even driving their cars along busy highways or in city traffic. Also common is seeing people active on their phones, talking, laughing and giving out instructions while driving along with one hand on the steering wheel. Also common is seeing people texting on their phones while walking on the roads. These activities usually distract these people of (from) possibly on-coming vehicles or persons or other objects along their ways. These distractions may result in human-human collisions, or worse human-vehicles accidents or even solo vehicular accidents where the driver veers off the road carelessly. This short report was that of a young resident doctor who narrowly escaped the loss of an eyeball due to a head injury sustained when he walked into the edge of an opened window while walking and texting.

**Keywords:** Telephone/Cell phones; Texting; Driving; Walking; Accidents; Distractions

### 1. Introduction

On a particular sunny and clear morning in the teaching hospital where the authors work, a group of three male resident doctors were walking down a walkway and everything was well and calm.

One of them was receiving and talking on his cell phone, the middle situated of the three was talking out obviously to the hearing of his colleagues, while the outward of them was with his neck bent forward over his two-handedly held cell phone and was actively texting.

Everything was looking bright and beautiful, when out, of nowhere, there was a loud sound of collision and this was followed by a loud sound of agony and pain from one of the three gentlemen that were previously strolling along happily.

The one that was texting on his cell phone was shouting out in pain, while holding his forehead/face firmly. Apparently, he had unknowingly walked into the edge of an open aluminum framed window.

He was in obvious pain, shouting out “my eye”, my eye” repeatedly at the top of his voice. Every one of us who witnessed the accident ran to him, fearing for the worst that he might have traumatized his eyeball.

But as luck would have it, he only sustained a laceration above his right eyebrow, sparing the eye-sockets completely. He was then taken to the hospital accident and emergency unit for medical attention to his lacerated forehead skin.

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A near calamity averted by chance, and hoping that he would learn and possibly teach others to abort the habit of texting, while doing, some other thing and to concentrate fully on whatever else that they are engaged with presently.



**Figure 1** Window pictures

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## 2. Discussion

The hand held mobile cell phone is a great innovation that had greatly transformed communication and communicating. It made telephone very accessible to the generality of people of all nations globally.

Telephoning is now accessible even to the most remote parts of the world.

However, along with this great invention and its subsequent comfort and ease for telecommunication, so also did it bring with it a notable inherent danger to its numerous users. One of such dangers is the potential risk to users of cell phones who use the instrument to text messages or browse the internet or receive and make calls while doing some other things. They therefore may not concentrate and focus on what activities that they are engaged with at those moments.

Such activities that persons had been reported doing while been distracted by activities on their cell phones includes driving a vehicle, walking, jogging on tracks. Some person had reported that while cooking in the kitchen, that they had been distracted by activities on their cell phones.

This distraction is most dangerous especially if they are using gas cookers, there had been a general warning against the use of cell phones while using gas cookers as unseen electromagnetic waves from the cell phones may trigger a gas explosion.

Driving a vehicle requires your full attention, and nothing is permitted to distract you by any means imaginable.

The term “distracted driving” has been coined out for any other actions or engagement that you may be involved with which may remove your full concentration on the act of driving <sup>(1)</sup>.

These other engagements causing distracted driving may include receiving/making calls on your cell phones, texting, eating or drinking while driving, talking to passenger while driving or paying attention to your car gadgets such as GPS, car musical stereo<sup>(1)</sup>.

It has been reported that texting is the most dangerous of all these numerous distractor. It has been estimated that texting removes your eyes from the road for at least five seconds in-between typing a new word, and this was likened to someone who drove his car at 55meters/hour across the length of a football field with his eyes closed <sup>(1,2,3)</sup>.

What a risk, this distraction posses danger to both the driver and other vehicles plying the same road and innocent by standers and pedestrians.

The United States Department of Transportation reported that distracted driving claimed the lives of well over 3,142 person in the year 2020<sup>(1,3)</sup>.

Distracted driving results into road traffic accidents with the consequential loss of life, broken bones and possible risk of amputation, and unforeseen monetary cost for possible prolonged hospital admissions <sup>(1,2)</sup>.

Furthermore, it was reported that distracted driving caused about 1.6million accidents each year and leads to over 390,000 injuries each year <sup>(4)</sup>.

An in-door stimulator determined that the use of cell phone while driving was by far more dangerous, with more calamitous consequences than driving a car while under the influence of alcohol<sup>(5)</sup>.

That same study determined that texting while driving may be more dangerous than when driving under the influence of cannabis <sup>(5)</sup>.

Likewise, the term “distracted walking” had been coined for injuries that may result when an accident occurred when one is texting on his phone and not paying attention to the environment with any accidents resulting <sup>(6,7)</sup>.

Texting while walking removes your capacity to be alert to your immediate surrounding <sup>(6,7)</sup>.

Distracted walking had resulted in pedestrians walking absent-mindedly across busy street roads with angry drivers honking furiously on their horns at such persons, in falls after getting tripped over objects on the roads/pavements, getting hit by vehicles, banging into walls or electric poles and erected sign posts <sup>(6,8,9)</sup>.

Distracted walking led to well over 270,000 death of pedestrians every year worldwide accounting for about a fifth of all deaths due to road traffic accidents <sup>(10)</sup>.

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### 3. Conclusion

The report suggested that the pedestrian death may increase in frequency as more people are purchasing and are using cell phone while walking un-focused across the roads and on walkways/pavement.

We hereby reported the near trauma to an eye of a male resident doctor who unconsciously banged into an opened window but had a minor laceration on his forehead.

We report this case as a point to advise people anywhere not to multi-task but to concentrate on whatsoever that they are doing presently and to use their cellphones when they are free from other daily activities.

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### Compliance with ethical standards

#### *Acknowledgments*

The Authors wish to acknowledge God Almighty for his mercies and goodness.

#### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

There are no conflict of interest.

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