

**ACTIVITY:** Swimming

**CASE:** GSAF 2001.05.20

**DATE:** Sunday May 20, 2001

**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Atlantic Ocean at Fripp Island, Beaufort County, South Carolina, USA. 32.4°N, 80.6°W

**NAME:** Michael Heidenreich, M.D.

**DESCRIPTION:** The swimmer is a male, a fifth year general surgical resident at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



### BACKGROUND

**WEATHER:** At 18h56, Beaufort MCAS recorded visibility of 6 miles [9.7 km]. The air temperature was 78.1°F [25.6 C], dew point 68°F [20°C], humidity 71%, sea level pressure 29.86 in [1011.0 hPa], and wind direction was South at 11.5 mph [18.5 km/h].

**MOON PHASE:** New Moon, May 22, 2001

**ENVIRONMENT:** Fripp Island is four miles in length and it has 3.5 miles of beach. It is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean on the east and deepwater creeks to the west.

**DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE:** "Waist-deep"

**TIME:** 19h00

**NARRATIVE:** The Heidenreichs, a family of physicians, had just started their vacation on the island. Michael was in the water with several family members when he felt something tugging at his leg. His father, Dr. Fred Heidenreich, was about 20 feet away when he saw him grimace and reach for the back of his leg. Initially, he thought his son had been hit by a stingray or jellyfish, but when he saw his torn calf, he realized that the injury was more serious. "There really wasn't much to it," Michael said. "It just kind of took a chomp and left. There wasn't a lot of pain. My concern was that it took a minute or so to get out of the water and I wasn't sure if it was coming back."

**FIRST AID:** Dr. Fred Heidenreich cleaned up the wound, put a compress on it and drove his son to the hospital.

**INJURY:** The wound extended across the base of the calf and was about 5.5 inches (13.5 cm) in length, and consisted of scalpel-like cuts.

**TREATMENT:** The swimmer was treated by Dr. Robert Rhodin, an orthopedic surgeon with Lowcountry Medical Group. Heidenreich was expected to be on crutches for at least four to six weeks, but Dr. Rhodin expected him to recover satisfactorily.

**SPECIES INVOLVED:** Charles Farmer, spokesman for the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, said that at least 18 shark species inhabit the state's coastal waters, including lemon, tiger, hammerhead, blacknose, sandbar and spinner sharks. "Their numbers increase close to shore as the water grows warmer, which means that the

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season during which the greatest number of people and the greatest number of sharks are in the same waters is the same,” Farmer said. “I can’t think of anything in our waters that would make me *not* go swimming or diving,” said Steve Vogle, South Carolina State Aquarium curator.

**SOURCES:** Charlotte Observer, May 23, 2001, page 2Y; J. Tatum, Greenville News, May 26, 2001

**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** Clay Creswell, Global Shark Accident File