

Bodychecking triples injury risk in Pee Wee hockey

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Bodychecking in Pee Wee hockey (with players aged 11-12) more than triples the risk of concussion and injury, according to a new study by researchers at the University of Calgary.

The researchers compared rates of [injury](#) between Alberta Pee Wee leagues, which allow body checking, and Quebec Leagues, which don't. The study followed 74 Alberta teams (1,108 players) and 76 Quebec teams (1,046 players) for a season, recording how and when injuries occurred during a game.

"I felt it was important to get some facts," says Carolyn Emery PhD, who is a sport epidemiologist, trained athletic therapist as well as a coach and hockey parent. "The two leagues provided an excellent opportunity to study the public health impact of concussion and injury associated with body checking, and the facts speak for themselves." Emery is a professor in the University of Calgary's Faculty of Kinesiology and Faculty of Medicine.

This is the first study of its kind to use valid injury surveillance and injury assessment by team physiotherapists and athletic therapists, along with follow-up by sport medicine physicians. The findings showed that Alberta Pee Wee players suffered 209 injuries compared to only 70 for Quebec players; the ratio was similar for other categories such as severe injury (73 - 20), concussion (73 - 20), and severe concussion (14 - 4).

The research, which was done in collaboration with researchers from

McGill University and Laval University, will be published in the June 9th edition of the prestigious [Journal of the American Medical Association](#).

Bodychecking in minor hockey is a volatile and complex issue with strong advocates on either side of the debate. Last winter Calgary Pee Wee hockey player Ash Kolstad was flattened by a blow to the head and sustained a severe concussion.

Due to post concussion symptoms he has been unable to resume his normal life and only recently returned to school. Despite this, his mother wouldn't want to see bodychecking removed from the Pee Wee game. "I don't think that bodychecking is the problem," says Rosalie Kolstad, "bodychecking is part of the game. Part of the problem might be players not knowing how to bodycheck which results in headshots or hits from behind, and I'm disappointed that some coaches and parents in the stands cheer those kinds of hits."

For her part, Dr. Emery hopes that her research will open a dialogue on whether checking should be allowed at all levels of Pee Wee Hockey.

"The public health impact is clear—if body checking were eliminated in Alberta Pee Wee, it is estimated that out of the 8,826 players registered, we could prevent over 1,000 game-related injuries per year and over 400 game-related concussions per year."

Provided by University of Calgary

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