Injury Incidence in Underage Male Field Hockey Players During a Three-Day Tournament

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One of the key priorities in youth sport is adoption of an evidence-based practice approach to player management and welfare. Conditioning of these young athletes and reduction of injury incidence is necessary to ensure long term athlete development. Tournaments are often used for talent identification and representational squad selection in underage sport. Despite the popularity of field hockey across the world, there is little research investigating the incidence of injury during tournament situations specifically in youth athletes. The aim of this study was to quantify injury incidence in under 16 and under 18 male field hockey players across a tournament weekend to aid practitioners in the design of sport-specific training programmes to reduce the risk of injury. Eighty-nine participants completed a daily injury incidence questionnaire after completion of the days’ games. Thirty-seven participants reported at least one injury across the weekend, primarily in the lower limb (74%). Muscle strains were the most common injury, mainly in the calf and hamstrings (33% and 27%) which were also the main sites of muscle soreness during the tournament. Injuries were most likely to occur during running without the ball, but also during clashes with other players. Just under half of all injuries occurred in the second day of the tournament with a third occurring on the third day. Location and mechanism of injury are similar to that observed in adult hockey. The increased injury incidence in the latter part of the tournament suggests high levels of conditioning are required to minimise risk of injury across the competition. Further research into the influence of rest period and cumulative fatigue is required in this population to further our understanding of processes to enhance long term athlete development.