

Forward K, Seabrook J, Lynch T. A comparison of the epidemiology of ice hockey injuries between male and female youth in Canada. *Paediatrics & Child Health*. 2014;19(8):418-22.

Lies, damned lies and statistics (1).

To the Editor;

I commend Forward et al (2) for their interesting and thought-provoking article based on data from emergency department visits due to hockey injury reported according to sex and injury type. Many additional factors, not mentioned in their discussion, should be considered in interpreting their data. First, the differences between the way parents view injury for girls and boys may influence whether they choose to go to the emergency department, wait to see a family doctor or do not turn to a medical professional (3). Second, males are less likely to seek help for medical care in general (4), making emergency department visits for soft tissue injury more likely for females. Third, where and if help is sought is dependent on social factors (5), and whether there is a trainer or medical professional present at games or practices who might treat injury on site without requiring further medical attention (6). Women's teams are less well funded, less supported by the media, less socially accepted and less likely to have a trainer or medical professional present at games and practices (3,6-8). Men are more likely to have an athletic trainer at practices and games, with an understanding of injury prevention exercise, warm-ups and the care of soft tissue injuries, perhaps circumventing the need to present to an emergency department (6).

Reporting that injury rates are higher in females than males without considering the societal factors that affect the reporting of these injuries supports the misogynist view that girls are too delicate for sport, especially a fast-paced and 'dangerous' sport such as hockey (9). An acknowledgement of these considerations would enhance the discussion presented in this article and lead to a deeper understanding of this complicated issue.

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The author responds;

Thank you Ms Scolnik for your insightful comments. However, we respectfully disagree that your suggestions would have led to a "deeper understanding" of the issues at hand. First, there is no evidence that Canadian parents are more likely to seek emergency medical care for female children than male children. Second, when examining the sports-injury literature, there is good evidence that males represent the overwhelming majority of children presenting to emergency departments with injuries (1). Third, since the implementation of the Hockey Canada National Safety Program in 1994, there have been major efforts to educate trainers and have them be present at all games involving both sexes and across all age groups (2). As emergency physicians and clinical investigators, our intent was to describe the injury patterns observed in female and male players and explore whether we could identify patterns that could lead to targeted injury prevention strategies. While it is important to elucidate factors that affect the decision to seek medical attention, the reasons highlighted do not reflect the societal shift in attitudes toward female sports over the past decade.

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