



Hockey research: Players, 'heads up'

Published: Aug. 13, 2010 at 10:01 PM

BUFFALO, N.Y., Aug. 13 (UPI) -- Most hockey injuries are caused by players not watching what's in front of them so coaches should remind players to keep heads up, U.S. researchers advise.

"Unintentional contact with the board, the ice or other players are important sources of serious unintended injury," senior author Barry Willer of the University at Buffalo says in a statement. "To avoid these accidents, hockey coaches must teach players to keep their heads up, rather than looking down at the puck."

The researchers analyzed data of more than 3,000 boys ages 4-18 for a total of 13,292 player years. Only injuries that kept a player off the ice for at least 24 hours were included.

The study, published in British Journal of Sports Medicine, found three times more accidental injuries than body-checking injuries in house hockey leagues. As competition level and player age increased, so did injuries.

"However, this study found that body checking did not account for a large proportion of injuries," Willer says. "Perhaps as important, body checking did not lead to a rise in intentional injuries."

The study found 34 percent of the injuries were caused by checking and the accidental injuries were more severe than those from body checks.

The body checking findings, says Willer, came as a surprise.

© 2010 United Press International, Inc. All Rights Reserved.