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Epidemiology of injuries in English community level rugby union using SMS player self-reported data.

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Background: The reporting of non-time loss injuries in community sport can be challenging due to infrequent contact between players and team medical staff. Text messaging or short messaging service (SMS) is a possible option for players to self-report these injuries.

Objective: Assess the incidence, site and inciting event of self-reported match injuries using SMS in men's community rugby union players.

Design: Using a cohort study design, consenting English community rugby players were contacted by SMS every Monday morning over a 33-week season with a follow-up on Tuesday for non-responders. Questions ascertained whether they played on the previous Saturday, whether they sustained an injury which 'inhibited or stopped them playing', the injured body site and if the injury event was contact or non-contact related.

Setting: English community rugby union during season 2015/16.

Participants: A total of 2990 players from 81 clubs were invited to participate. Mobile telephone numbers were provided by 1178 players (39%) from 41 clubs. The weekly mean response rate of players reporting whether or not they played was 61±2%.

Independent variables: Player match exposure, playing position.

Main Outcome Measurements: Injury incidence.

Results: Players reported 860 injuries over 9025 matches (71.5 injuries per 1000 player-match hours; 95% CI:66.7-76.2). Contact events accounted for 84% of injuries. The head was the most commonly injured site (11.1; 95% CI:9.2-12.9). Injury incidence was similar in forwards (68.7 95% CI 61.8-75.6) and backs (71.7 95% CI 64.1-79.6) but forwards reported a higher incidence of shoulder injuries than backs (9.8 95% CI:7.2-12.4 versus 5.4 95% CI:3.3-7.5; P=0.014) and backs reported a higher incidence of thigh injuries (3.3 95% CI:1.8-4.8 versus 10.6 95% CI:7.6-13.6; P<0.001).

Conclusions: SMS is a useful tool for recording self-reported injuries in large cohorts of community team sport players and may provide additional insight into injuries which do not result in missed matches.

