

"Is rugby a safe leisure pursuit for children and adolescents?"

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Rugby is a popular team sport with an estimated 204 119 male and female participants in South Africa [1, 2]. Rugby however, is inherently dangerous and has many safety concerns due to the high-impact nature of the game [1, 2]. At school level in South Africa rugby is typically a team sport played by developing males and has become increasingly popular post-1994. Several concerns have been raised about school rugby - the firstly whether the rules used to regulate this game are in fact ensuring the safety of the players effectively; secondly whether occupational therapists who encourage clients to participate in rugby as a leisure activity understand the full extent of the dangers involved in this game and whether they communicate the risks well enough to clients. These dangers are important to understand when suggesting team sports for children and adolescents. This research consists of two phases. This presentation is on the first phase of the study. Phase one developed a matrix to conduct a content analysis of the rules of rugby and their alignment with the developmental milestones of children. This purpose of this research was to determine whether the rules ensure the safety of the players in terms of both their musculoskeletal and cognitive development and whether adjustments need to be made to make the game safer for school-aged participants. The research provides valuable information about whether rugby should be recommended for children as a leisure occupation.