Reviewer’s report

Title: A survey of referee participation, training and injury in elite gaelic games referees

Version: 1 Date: 16 January 2009

Reviewer: Belinda Gabbe

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript which described the current and past injuries of elite Gaelic Games referees. The manuscript comprehensively describes the results of a retrospective survey of referees, is generally well written (though needs a good edit), had a very good response rate, and presents new information. I have a number of comments and queries that I hope will be useful.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. There is a published paper about Australian football umpire injuries which is old but could be useful for comparisons and providing a comprehensive literature summary. The citation is: Brukner P, Kahn K, Carlisle J. Comparison of significant injuries in AFL players and umpires. The Australian Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport 1991; 23 21-23

2. Define GAA when used the first time in the methods.

3. The definition of injury is “any injury…….” It’s not really an injury definition, but more the threshold for reporting of an injury. Have other authors used this definition? Can you validate it?

4. Paragraph 1 of the results refers to “no statistically significant differences” but since no statistical tests were used, you cannot use this. If you were using overlapping confidence intervals to establish the potential for significance, this should be stated in the methods and references provided for the appropriateness of this usage.

5. There appears to be some confusion about when to use the whole sample or the injured sample for calculating the percentages. When the percentage relates to a descriptor of injury such as the context (e.g. training vs. other) or region injured, it should be the % of the injured sample.

6. In the method of treatment, there is a statement that “physiotherapy was required” – I think this should be modified to “a physiotherapist was consulted” or else define who determined that this treatment was “required”. It’s a small point but worth clarifying.

7. In the author’s contributions, who is CS? This doesn’t appear to correspond to any authors.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Please define “commitment” as you use it in this manuscript. Are you referring
to time commitment, financial, or other?

2. It would be useful to give a quick summary in the introduction about what the referees do exactly that would put them at risk of injury. Sprinting, sharp changes of direction, body contact? Many readers will be unfamiliar with the Gaelic games and may not be able to picture what is involved. This would also be useful for comparing with other sports.

3. In the methods, the length of recall needs to be established including any justification for this recall period and its validity.

4. The methods suggest that qualitative and quantitative data were collected but the analysis section does not describe how you handled the qualitative data.

5. In the first paragraph of the discussion, you describe the prevalence of injury burden in this group but it reads as though this burden is all referee related. Clearly, injuries were sustained in other contexts and other forms of sports participation. If the manuscript is about referee injuries, then the prevalence of refereeing-related injuries should be the focus. Otherwise, it becomes murky as the question would be what the injury burden in the general population of this age group of males in Ireland actually is.

6. Some mechanism of injury information would be useful to establish what elements of referee work lead to injury. In table 2, you refer to the mechanism of injury but this is not mechanism but context. For mechanism, you would want to know if the injury occurred during sprinting, falling, twisting, etc.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.