

September 24, 2012

Mr. Bill Barrable
Chief Executive Officer
Rick Hansen Institute
6th Floor, Blusson Spinal Cord Centre
6400 - 818 W. 10th Avenue,
Vancouver, BC V5Z 1M9

Dear Bill:

As you know ThinkFirst is involved in injury prevention programs in many sports, and we have developed many injury prevention programs for hockey most of which are described on www.thinkfirst.ca.

I understand that in BC bodychecking is still permitted in the PeeWee Rep Division (age 11-12). There is now compelling scientific evidence that children are at higher risk for head and neck injuries (ie. concussions, spinal cord injuries) when bodychecking is allowed. We believe that bodychecking should not be allowed at the Atom and Pee Wee levels. Indeed there are some experts who recommend, based on emerging medical evidence, delaying the introduction of bodychecking until age 14 or older.

I also understand that Atom and Peewee Rep Divisions in BC combine more than one year age groups together. Based on my medical experience and recent research findings I believe it extremely unwise with respect to player safety and injury prevention to mix players of more than one year age difference at this early stage of their development. Age difference translates into height and weight differences and the latter are extremely important for generating forces that can impact the body, especially the brain and spinal cord.

I would caution the Rep leagues in BC to avoid this age discrepancy in the interest of promoting and protecting child safety in hockey. Instead I would urge BC to implement the best practices which are now being adopted in some other provinces. These include the elimination of bodychecking in PeeWee Rep hockey and dividing Atom and PeeWee Rep teams into one year increments rather than the current teams that span up to two years in age.

Please share this message with the league authorities. I would be pleased to share further information about this important subject.

Yours sincerely,



Charles H. Tator, CM, MD, PhD, FRCSC
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Toronto Western Hospital,
Founder, ThinkFirst, Canada