

Chronology of Events in Debate with UK CMOs Physical Activity Expert Group (PAEG)

This lists the sequence of events from the initial publication of book on tackling rugby injury to response to Tucker et al in BJSM; to accompany the response of Professor Allyson Pollock and Professor Eric Anderson, on behalf of the Sport Collision Injury Collective, to the undated response of the UK Physical Activity Expert Group to the Collective's open letter of 1st March 2016.

<u>Date of article</u>	<u>Article</u>
September 2014	"Tackling Rugby: What Every Parent Should Know" by Allyson M. Pollock published by Verso books. (1)
07 December 2014	Written submission to the House of Commons Health Committee Inquiry into the impact of physical activity and diet on health submitted by members of the Child Sport Participation Workshop which met at Queen Mary University of London in November 2014, calling for an evidence based approach to policy on obesity, physical activity and diet and for the avoidance of the benefits of "physical activity, exercise and sport and play" being solely attributed to sport. (2)
08 January 2015	"Systematic review of rugby injuries in children and adolescents under 21 years" by Andreas Freitag, Graham Kirkwood, Sebastian Scharer, Richard Ofori-Asenso and Allyson M Pollock published online first in British Journal of Sport Medicine (BJSM). (3) Contains meta-analysis of incidence of injury.
15 January 2015	"Concussion in youth rugby union and rugby league: a systematic review" by Graham Kirkwood, Nikesh Parekh, Richard Ofori-Asenso and Allyson M Pollock published online first in BJSM. (4)
25 March 2015	Health Committee publishes report on the impact of physical activity and diet on people's health, concluding that "there needs to be far greater emphasis on the benefits of physical activity and that this is independent of issues such as obesity." (5)
21 April 2015	"Rugby injury surveillance and prevention programmes: are they effective?" by Andreas Freitag, Graham Kirkwood and Allyson M Pollock published online first in BMJ. (6)
24 September 2015	"Turning people into couch potatoes is not the cure for sports concussion" editorial by Catherine Calderwood, Andrew Duncan Murray and William Stewart (7) published online first in BJSM. Cites systematic review on

concussion in youth rugby by Kirkwood et al (4) and describes it as “challenging”.

01 March 2016 “Open letter: Preventing injuries in children playing school rugby” from Sport Collision Injury Collective (SCIC), Professors Allyson Pollock and Eric Anderson with 71 additional signatories sent to UK and Ireland Chief Medical Officers (CMOs), Children’s Commissioners and responsible ministers of state for health, education and sport. (8)

02 March 2016 Response to SCIC open letter from Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) published online claiming safety is being addressed in school rugby but requires time to “bed in” and conflating benefits from physical activity with those from rugby. (9)

03 March 2016 Response to open letter from Faculty of Sports and Exercise Medicine (FSEM) citing lack of evidence to justify call to remove the tackle in school rugby and the need for improved data. (10)

19 April 2016 “Removing contact from school rugby will not turn children into couch potatoes” editorial by Pollock and Kirkwood (11) published online first in BJSM answering claims and criticisms in RCPCH (9) and FSEM (10) pieces and in the Calderwood et al editorial (7).

23 May 2016 Submission to the Sport Duty of Care Review: call for evidence from the Department for Culture, Media & Sport by Allyson M Pollock and Graham Kirkwood on prevention of head injury and concussion in sport

20 June 2016 “Injury risk and a tackle ban in youth Rugby Union: reviewing the evidence and searching for targeted, effective interventions. A critical review” by Ross Tucker, Martin Raftery and Evert Verhagen (12) published online first in BJSM purporting to refute evidence underpinning SCIC open letter, in particular from the earlier systematic review on youth rugby injury by Freitag et al (3)

29 July 2016 Response received from UK CMOs rejecting call to remove tackle from school game citing evidence from their Physical Activity Expert Group (PAEG) and also referring to the article by Tucker et al (12).

16 September 2016 Response to Tucker et al article (12) submitted to BJSM by Pollock and colleagues

19 October 2016 First round of reviewers’ comments, three reviewers and 17 pages of comments in total received

28 October 2016 First revision submitted

01 December 2016 Second round of reviewers’ comments, two reviewers and 16 pages of comments in total received

22 December 2016 Second revision submitted

06 February 2017 Third round of reviewers’ comments, two reviewers and 10 pages of comments in total received. Also suggested edits from editor.

22 March 2017 Third revision submitted

08 April 2017 Recommended publication with one minor revision

10 April 2017 Fourth revision submitted

04 May 2017 Accepted for publication in BJSM

13 July 2017

“Evidence in support of the call to ban the tackle and harmful contact in school rugby: a response to World Rugby” by Pollock AM, White AJ, Kirkwood G published in BJSM (13)

Main Points in
Response to PAEG

- Rugby union and rugby league are the most commonly played collision sports offered in school as part of the physical education curriculum in England.
- Many schools make rugby compulsory and there is a lack of teacher training in the skills of rugby and in concussion awareness.
- Experts agree that rugby has high risks of injury compared with other team sports.
- Rugby has a higher rate of concussion than any other team sport.
- Injuries in rugby, including serious injuries which can occur at any body site, are most likely to occur during collision, especially during the tackle.
- There is strong evidence from youth ice-hockey that rule changes disallowing collision have a dramatic effect in lowering concussion risk.
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 19) states that governments have a duty to protect children from risks of injury, an international legal obligation of the United Kingdom.
- Children must be allowed to play and be active and responsible authorities have a duty to prevent them from unnecessary harm while doing so.
- The conclusion of this response to the PAEG is to repeat the request to the individual country’s chief medical officers (CMOs) to advise in accordance with the evidence and to the responsible state ministers to remove the tackle and other forms of harmful contact such as the scrum, ruck and maul from school rugby on the basis of the evidence available.

References

1. Pollock AM. Tackling rugby. What every parent should know about injuries.: Verso; 2014.
2. Pollock AM and 16 other members of the Child Sport Participation Workshop. Written submission to the House of Commons Health Committee Inquiry into the impact of physical activity and diet on health2014. Available from: http://www.allysonpollock.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/AP_2014_ChildSport_HSC_Inquiry_2014.pdf.
3. Freitag A, Kirkwood G, Scharer S, Ofori-Asenso R, Pollock AM. Systematic review of rugby injuries in children and adolescents under 21 years. British journal of sports medicine. 2015;49(8):511-9.

4. Kirkwood G, Parekh N, Ofori-Asenso R, Pollock AM. Concussion in youth rugby union and rugby league: a systematic review. *British journal of sports medicine*. 2015;49(8):506-10.
5. House of Commons Health Committee. Health - Sixth Report. Impact of physical activity and diet on health.2015. Available from: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/health-committee/news/activity-diet-health-substantive/>.
6. Freitag A, Kirkwood G, Pollock AM. Rugby injury surveillance and prevention programmes: are they effective? *BMJ*. 2015;350:h1587.
7. Calderwood C, Murray AD, Stewart W. Turning people into couch potatoes is not the cure for sports concussion. *British journal of sports medicine*. 2016;50(4):200-1.
8. Sport Collision Injury Collective. Open Letter: Preventing injuries in children playing school rugby2016. Available from: <http://www.sportcic.com/resources/Open%20Letter%20SportCIC%20March1st%202016.pdf>.
9. Viner R. RCPCH responds to letter calling for ban on school rugby2016. Available from: <http://www.rcpch.ac.uk/news/rcpch-responds-letter-calling-ban-school-rugby>.
10. Jackson PD. FSEM Responds to call for 'a ban on collision elements of rugby within British schools'.2016. Available from: <http://www.fsem.ac.uk/news/faculty-news/2016/march/contact-sports.aspx>.
11. Pollock AM, Kirkwood G. Removing contact from school rugby will not turn children into couch potatoes. *British journal of sports medicine*. 2016;50(16):963-4.
12. Tucker R, Raftery M, Verhagen E. Injury risk and a tackle ban in youth Rugby Union: reviewing the evidence and searching for targeted, effective interventions. A critical review. *British journal of sports medicine*. 2016;50(15):921-5.
13. Pollock AM, White AJ, Kirkwood G. Evidence in support of the call to ban the tackle and harmful contact in school rugby: a response to World Rugby. *British journal of sports medicine*. 2017;51:1108-13.