Due to the fast and physical nature of the game, prevention of injuries is an important issue in ice hockey. The injuries of the German male senior and junior (U16, U17, U18, U19, U20) national ice hockey teams were documented and analyzed in 1006 games between 1986 and 2006. This unique long observation period over 20 years, as well as the standardized protocol of documentation provides reliable data concerning injury pattern in German international ice hockey. Overall 277 injuries were recorded. Comparing the first and the last ten years of observation, the number did not decline over the time, despite various national and international efforts of injury prevention. The majority of the injuries, almost 60%, were caused by body contact with increasing tendency. Remarkably, the injuries with no body or puck/stick contact more than doubled in the last ten years compared to the first ten years of observation. Most injuries happened to the extremities with decreasing tendency to lower body and increasing tendency to upper body injuries. The number of head injuries did not change significantly. More injuries occurred in the second and third period compared to the first period of the game. The data of this study indicate that many injuries might be due to insufficient physical condition with consecutive lack of concentration and coordination. Players do not seem to meet the increasing technical and athletic requirements of international
ice-hockey. The increasing speed and physical energy in international ice-hockey make the game unique and fascinating. Therefore, the aim must be to decrease the number and above all the severity of injuries by further development and adjustment of the player's equipment. Also, a better cooperation of players, coaches, sports medicine and referees seems to be necessary for injury prevention in the future.