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Tommy John Surgeries Increasing for Youth Athletes

ORLANDO, FL – Surgeries related to overuse elbow injuries, i.e. Tommy John Surgery, are more common among youth athletes than previously believed, according to research presented today at the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine's (AOSSM) Annual Meeting in Orlando, Florida.

“Our results showed that 15-19 year-olds accounted for 56.7 percent of the Ulnar Collateral Ligament Reconstruction (UCLR) or Tommy John surgeries performed in the U.S. between 2007-2011. This is a significant increase over time with an average increase of 9.12 percent per year,” said lead author, Brandon Erickson, MD of Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, Illinois.

Erickson and his team performed a retrospective analysis of a private payer database using the PearlDiver Supercomputer to identify UCLR procedures performed throughout the U.S. The overall average annual incidence of the procedure was 3.96 +/-0.38 per 100,000 patients with an annual overall growth rate of 4.2 percent. There were 695 males and 95 females involved in the analysis. Twenty to 24-year olds accounted for the second highest incident rate at 22.2 percent.

Other interesting details from the study included that the southern region of the U.S. performed significantly more UCLR procedures than any other region with 53 percent. Most of the surgeries were also performed between April and June. Fifty-eight percent of the procedures were performed in an outpatient hospital setting, 40 percent were performed at a surgical center and three percent performed in an inpatient hospital setting.

“The research numbers suggest that more young athletes believe that having an UCLR procedure performed earlier in their career may lead to the big leagues or a scholarship, even though only one in 200 kids who play high school baseball will make it to the MLB. This paradigm shift needs to be evaluated further to help prevent overuse injuries in kids from the beginning of the season when most issues arise,” said Erickson.

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The [American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine](http://www.aossm.org) (AOSSM) is a world leader in sports medicine education, research, communication and fellowship, and includes national and international orthopaedic sports medicine leaders. The Society works closely with many other sports medicine specialists, including athletic trainers, physical therapists, family physicians, and others to improve the identification, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation of sports injuries. AOSSM is also a founding partner of the [STOP Sports Injuries](http://www.stopsportsinjuries.org) campaign to prevent overuse and traumatic injuries in kids. For more information on AOSSM or the STOP Sports Injuries campaign, visit www.sportsmed.org or www.stopsportsinjuries.org