

Unlocking injury truths

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GEELONG'S bumped, bruised and bloodied local footballers have helped medicos understand the different ways the game bangs up its male and female players.

More than 1600 community footy casualties took part in a landmark Deakin University study that compared the injuries that forced them into hospitals in Geelong and southwest Victoria.

The researchers expected to find female footballers suffered



Deakin has studied how footballers of both sexes are hurt.

concussion and serious injuries to the anterior cruciate ligament in their knees more often than males, but were surprised to learn those ailments happened at a similar rate.

But their investigation did



reveal some differences in how women and men were hurt playing the game.

It showed female footballers were more likely to dislocate their kneecap or hurt their hands, fingers and neck.

The treatments more common for females included X-rays, CT scans and pain relief.

The study showed men were more likely to be admitted to hospital and need surgery because of a footy injury.

They more commonly suffered bloody cuts or copped injuries to their shoulders and torso, including the thorax, abdomen and pelvis.

The Aussie rules football injury study was unique because it included female players and compared their injuries to those suffered by males, and

because of its focus on the sport at the grassroots level.

"Given the increasing number of female footy players, it's important that we understand the risks involved," said Dr Stephen Gill, from Deakin's School of Medicine at Geelong's St John of God Hospital.

He said the research would help players, coaches and medicos develop injury-prevention tactics.

"For example, do female players try and mark the football differently to male players, which explains the higher

number of hand and finger injuries?" Dr Gill said.

"If we can figure this out, then we can implement targeted, gender-specific injury prevention programs."

Undertaken in 2019, the research has just been published in a medical journal.

It was conducted by Deakin, the Barwon Centre for Orthopaedic Research and Education and emergency departments at 10 hospitals in Geelong and southwest Victoria, with support from the AFL Research Board.