## 0414 DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF AN OBJECTIVE CHECKLIST FOR ASSESSING THE SAFETY CONDITION OF NATURAL TURF SPORTS SURFACES

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Sports played on outdoor grass spaces are threatened by the potential impact of climatic changes on injury risk associated with factors such as increased ground hardness and poor grass coverage. Unfortunately, formal, validated criteria for assessing ground conditions for player safety, other than the presence of hazards, are not available. Notwithstanding this, sports safety policy makers and ground managers need to make evidence-informed decisions about ground closure. Although the use of observational safety checklists to assess the presence of physical hazards and ground conditions is widespread, they have not been formally evaluated. This talk presents the development and validation of an observational checklist, the Good Practice Sports Grounds Inspection Form (GPSGIF). An initial version of the GPSGIF, drawn from current best practice and available evidence, assessed factors including ground hardness, hazards, grass coverage and traction. An initial evaluation through 31 assessments across nine community football grounds on different dates during the 2007 playing season led to refinement of the GPSGIF. The revised GPSGIF was re-tested in 2008 and the impact of both ground standard and formal training of assessors on GPSGIF reliability determined through assessments of four grounds on three dates by six observers. The final GPSGIF had good-excellent reliability for all factors, except traction, and could be used as a screening tool for ground assessments when expensive testing equipment is neither available nor needed. Ground safety assessors

with formal training in GPSGIF use reach more consensus safety decisions about sports ground safety than untrained assessors.