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Obstacle course runs: review of acquired injuries and illnesses at a series of Canadian events (RACE)

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Abstract

Background The growing popularity of obstacle course runs (OCRs) has led to significant concerns regarding their safety. The influx of injuries and illnesses in rural areas where OCRs are often held can impose a large burden on emergency medical services (EMS) and local EDs. Literature concerning the safety of these events is minimal and mostly consists of media reports. We sought to characterise the injury and illness profile of OCRs and the level of medical care required.

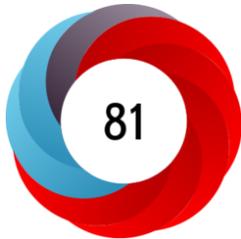
Methods This study analysed OCR events occurring in eight locations across Canada from May to August 2015 (total 45 285 participants). Data were extracted from event medical charts of patients presenting to the onsite medical team, including injury or illness type, onsite treatment and disposition.

Results There were 557 race participants treated at eight OCR events (1.2% of all participants). There were 609 medical complaints in total. Three quarters of injuries were musculoskeletal in nature. Eighty-nine per cent returned to the event with no need for further medical care. The majority of treatments were completed with first aid and basic medical equipment. Eleven patients (2% of patients) required transfer to hospital by EMS for presentations including fracture, dislocation, head injury, chest pain, fall from height, and abdominal pain.

Conclusions We found that 1.2% of race participants presented to onsite medical services. The majority of complaints were minor and musculoskeletal in nature. Only 2% of those treated were transferred to hospital through EMS. This is consistent with other types of mass gathering events.

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