**BACKGROUND**
- Early year-round training in a single sport such as ice hockey has been consistently associated with high rates of overuse injuries.
- Despite the increasingly well-known risk of early specialization, many young athletes and their families elect to specialize in a single sport due to the perception that this practice gives them the best chance of attaining elite athletic status.
- However, early specialization in women’s ice hockey has not previously been shown to be reliably associated with attainment of elite levels of performance.

**OBJECTIVE**
- The purpose of this study was to characterize training practices and attitudes of professional women’s ice hockey players regarding single sport specialization.

**METHODS**
- Players self-reported:
  - Years playing organized ice hockey
  - Age of specialization
  - # sports played prior to specialization
  - Descriptive statistics calculated
  - GraphPad Prism 8, GraphPad Software, (La Jolla, CA)

**RESULTS**
- 54 players completed the survey
  - 100% response rate
  - Average age = 25 years (+/- 2.5, range 21-31 years)
  - Average years played ice hockey: 19.4 +/- 3.4 years
  - Average age of ice hockey specialization: 16.1 +/- 3.3 years old
  - Number of sports played prior to specialization: 3.5 +/- 1.4 sports
  - 49 players (91%) reported that playing multiple sports POSITIVELY affected their ice hockey careers

**CONCLUSIONS**
- Professional women’s ice hockey players:
  - Are introduced to the sport at a young age
    - e.g., childhood/ and pre-adolescence
  - Specialize exclusively at age 16 years
    - e.g., mid-adolescence
  - ~2 years later than elite male hockey players
  - Participate in multiple sports prior to focusing on ice hockey
  - Value the early experience of sports sampling

**FIGURE 1.** Specialization survey completed anonymously by the athletes.