

Vienna, 6 July 2016

Austrian ski researchers trigger rule change for professionals which sees the number of serious injuries drop by 24 percent in just four years

The nation's top researchers will present their findings at the ECSS Congress at the Austria Center Vienna from 6-9 July. Focuses include the optimal length and taper for skis as well as the positive health effects of the sport on older skiers.

- **Injury risks** use of **unsuitable materials** and tendency for skiers to **overestimate their own ability**
- Austrian study leads to change in FIS regulation on taper, length and width of skis: **24 percent drop in serious injuries** in the past four years
- **Risk of accident halved** over the past 15 years for recreational skiers thanks to better materials and more moderate approach to sport
- **Positive effects confirmed:** skiing is good for the health of older skiers

“Fundamental **changes** in the taper, length and width of **skis** have helped to significantly **reduce the number of injuries in professional skiing**,” explained ECSS Congress Board member Prof. Erich Müller, who is also head of Sport Science and the Christian Doppler Laboratory Biomechanics in Skiing in Salzburg.

With the help of the FIS, his latest study pinpointed the root causes of serious injuries. In addition to a tendency for skiers to overestimate their own abilities, equipment was cited as one of the key risk factors and subsequently targeted through a change to the taper of the skis. “Our findings resulted in a change to the **rules for professional skiers** four years ago. Since their introduction, the number of serious accidents involving professional skiers has gone down by 24 percent. The move also took out some of the aggressiveness of movement in the ski itself, and the skiers are now taking more responsibility for themselves,” Prof. Müller concluded. The new insights into materials were also transferred to **non-competitive applications** and channelled into technological developments designed to **minimise the risk of injury**.

Skiing less dangerous than originally thought

Generally speaking, the risk of injury among **non-competitive skiers** has **declined** over recent years, but adoption of the right materials and a less aggressive skiing style has the potential to minimise exposure still further. “Just 15 years ago the risk of injury was twice as high as it is now. We were even able to prove in another study that skiing is unfairly branded a high-risk sport. In fact, it is a good way for people of all ages to stay fit. The positive effects of the sport not only extend to physical condition in terms of building up endurance and muscle function – they also have an impact on psychological wellbeing. Although skiing calls

for a great deal of concentration and body control, skiers can always choose to adopt a more moderate approach,” Prof. Müller noted.

Austria’s favourite sport – no heightened risk for older skiers

A study of 28 people aged between 62 and 76 revealed a host of **positive effects**. The simple conclusion was that skiing was a good way to stay in shape in old age. “Alongside measurable **physical improvements**, positive impacts on **subjective wellbeing** were also identified. The individuals covered by the study confirmed that skiing gave them a greater sense of purpose,” Prof. Müller concluded.

About the ECSS Congress

The ECSS Congress is the world’s largest multidisciplinary sports science congress. It will take place in Vienna for the first time from 6-9 July under the banner of ‘Crossing Borders Through Sport Science’. During the event almost 2,700 sports scientists will converge on the Austria Center Vienna to network and discuss the latest developments in their disciplines. Organised by the European College of Sport Science for the 21st time this year, the 2016 event will play out under the patronage of Congress President Prof. Arnold Baca.

About the Austria Center Vienna

The Austria Center Vienna is operated by Internationales Amtssitz- und Konferenzzentrum Wien, Aktiengesellschaft (IAKW-AG), which is also responsible for maintaining the Vienna International Centre (VIC). The Austria Center Vienna is Austria’s largest conference centre, with 24 halls, 180 meeting rooms, and some 42,000 square metres of event space (including 22,000 square metres of exhibition space), and is one of the top players on the international conference circuit. IAKW-AG and the Austria Center Vienna are headed by Chief Executive Officer Susanne Baumann-Söllner. www.acv.at.

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