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Price, OJ and Ansley, L and Hull, JH (2013) Bronchoprovocation testing for diagnosis of EIB in Athletes: Is one test enough? In: European Respiratory Society (2013), Barcelona, Spain.

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Bronchoprovocation testing for diagnosis of EIB in Athletes: Is one test enough?

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Background: Exercise-induced bronchoconstriction (EIB) is highly prevalent in athletes and impacts on their health and performance. The gold-standard means for diagnosing EIB is indirect bronchoprovocation testing, however the repeatability of this methodology is not established. **Aims and objectives:** To evaluate the short-term test-retest repeatability of eucapnic voluntary hyperpnea (EVH). **Methods:** Twenty-five recreationally active men ($n=21$) and women ($n=4$) were recruited. Participants were required to attend on two separate occasions separated by a period of fourteen days. Participants performed spirometry before and following (at 3,5,10 and 15 mins) an EVH challenge (6 minutes at 85% maximum voluntary ventilation). Difference in forced expiratory volume in one second (FEV_1) between visits was analysed using Bland-Altman methodology. **Results:** 22 subjects completed both visits ($n=3$ excluded - unwell), mean (SD) age 25 (± 4) yrs, FEV_1 102 (± 8.6) % predicted. There was no significant difference in maximum fall in FEV_1 post EVH between visits ($P>0.05$), however Bland-Altman analysis revealed wide limits of agreement (-10.36-7.9%) for the difference in fall in FEV_1 between visits. A diagnosis of EIB ($>10\%$ fall in FEV_1) was established in two athletes at visit one whereas this increased to five athletes at visit 2. Importantly, only one athlete had a diagnosis of EIB confirmed at both visits. **Conclusion:** In this cohort of athletes EVH demonstrated poor repeatability over a fixed two-week period. The findings highlight the need for caution when considering confirming or refuting a diagnosis of EIB based on a solitary indirect bronchoprovocation test and a cut-off value of 10% fall in FEV_1 .