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Average return to play time following anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction in elite athletes participating in different sports – A literature review

Louai Abdeh

Manchester Royal Infirmary, UK

Introduction: Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) ruptures are career-threatening injuries for athletes. A common question asked by athletes following ACL repair is the time frame for return to sport. This difficult decision is influenced by many elements, but a key factor is the type of sport that the athlete participates in. A review of current literature was conducted to compare the average return to play time of athletes competing in different sports.

Methods: A literature search yielded 646 papers from the earliest possible entry to November 2018. However only 21 Studies, from 6 different sports, evaluated the average return to play time of professional athletes following an ACL injury. This review also examined the factors which influenced the athletes' return to play time.

Results: The average return to play time in soccer athletes varied from 5.5 to 12 months depending on the league and country of participation, whilst the average return to play time ranged from 10.7 to 12.4 months for American football players. In comparison, the average return to play time for other sports was 9.8 months for hockey, 11.6 months for basketball, 12 months for alpine skiers and 13.6 months for baseball. Factors influencing athletes' return to play time included tailored rehabilitation, referral to experienced surgeons and time of season at which the athlete was injured.

Conclusion: Return to sport following ACL injury was influenced by many factors including the sport that athletes participated in. Additionally, the return to play time varied within the same sport when leagues from different countries were analysed; supporting the theory that the return to sports time is multifactorial. Due to the relative scarcity of studies involving elite athletes, we suggest that more high-quality studies are required to improve our understanding and ability to facilitate athletes' successful return to sport following an ACL injury.

Biography

My name is Louai Abdeh and I am a Trauma & Orthopedics Core Surgical Trainee at the Manchester Royal Infirmary. As a medical student and junior doctor, I have taken an active role in many clinical governance and research projects, and I have presented at a number of conferences including the ASiT International Conference 2018, Barts and London National Undergraduate Surgical Conference and Warwick Undergraduate Regional Medical Conference. I have also completed a Master of Research in Tissue Engineering for Regenerative Medicine, and I received a distinction grade for my dissertation "The Role of Macrophages and Mast Cells in Fibroblast to Myofibroblast Differentiation- An insight into the Relationship between Inflammatory Cells and Fibrosis".

louai.abdeh@doctors.org.uk