

EPIDEMIOLOGY OF THE MUSCULAR INJURIES IN ITALIAN SOCCER

Tavana R

Sports Rehabilitation Centre Isokinetic, Milano, Italy

Introduction

Injury is a frequent event in football (soccer). An injury is defined as any physical complaint, incurrent during match or training session, that requires absence from almost 1 training session or match. We try to understand epidemiology of muscular injuries in football in Italy.

Methods

We compared personal data from two professional Italian teams (the first team competing four seasons in A division from 1999 to 2003; the second one competing in A division in the 2000-01 season), with the data collected by the Isokinetic Sports Rehabilitation Centres and with the UEFA study on nine football clubs from Italy, Great Britain, Netherlands, Spain and France (2).

Results and discussion

Italy, like other Mediterranean top-level football clubs, has less injuries (all type of injuries) than England and Holland (UEFA champion's league study: 26 vs. 38 injuries per 1,000 hours). Considering the data from two top level Italian teams we see that there is a range of 65-73 injuries per season.

If we consider the exposition of a top level Italian football club during four seasons, the total number of injuries that occurred during 1,213 sessions (training and matches) were 254, that means an incidence of 0.2 injuries per session or a media of 1 injury every 5 sessions.

When we consider the competitive matches and we count the total number of injuries that required substitution of the player, we found 108 injuries in 243 matches, that is 0.4 injuries per match.

What kind of injuries? The results of our data and that of the UEFA studies are similar: the most frequent injuries affect the muscles of the players. Considering the 254 injuries of a top level Italian team we found: 85 muscle injuries (34%), 68 joint injuries (27%), 53 contusion (21%), 24 low back pain (9%), 18 tendonitis (7%), 6 fractures (2%). In the other top level Italian team we found 73 injuries subdivided into: 28 muscles injuries (38%), 21 joint injuries (28%), 12 contusions (16%) and 4 fractures (5%). In both teams the hamstrings were the most frequent site of the muscular injuries and this information is similar in UEFA study and in the FIFA study conducted during the World Cup 2002 (1).

Conclusions

Injuries are frequent in professional football in Italy like in other European west countries. Most risk of injury is for muscles and specifically for hamstrings. This information is important for trainers to develop programs of prevention (stretching, core stability, recovery strategies, re-hydration during training sessions and matches, etc.) so that they can loose less players during the season for medical reasons.

References

1. Junge A. et Al. Football Injury during world cup 2002. Am J Sports Med 32:S23-S27, 2004.
 2. Walden et Al. UEFA champions league study. 7th Scandinavian Congress of Medicine and Science in Sports, 2004.
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