

TREATMENT STRATEGY IN LUMBAR DISC HERNIATION IN PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALLERS

Fahy D

Fortius Clinic, London, United Kingdom



In comparison to Knee and Foot and Ankle injuries, significant back injuries are less common in this patient group.

Previous studies have suggested a similar prevalence of low back issues in professional athletes (excluding some high load sports) as the general population.

The majority of spinal issues affecting professional football players fall into two groups; stress reactions / pars and pedicle stress fractures and disc issues. Although spondylolysis and related injuries are more common than in the general population, disc injuries are the most common cause of significant back pain in footballers.

As with the general population, the vast majority of disc injuries in this group will be managed very well with full return to pre injury levels. The unique requirements of the professional athletic group may mean that the treatment algorithm differs to the general population, both with regard to the necessity for high level recovery and the time allowable for that recovery.

The natural history of disc injury including prolapse and degenerative discogenic pain is spontaneous resolution in >80% of cases within 4 to 8 weeks. This is facilitated by active rehabilitation, appropriate analgesia and time. Indications for intervention include neurological compromise and pain. The additional indication of requirement to return to competitive play is a soft but important one in this group.

The treatment options range from exercise through injection therapy to surgical interventions.