

## FOOTBALL REHABILITATION - THE LANDSCAPE

### Batty P

Isokinetic Medical Group, FIFA Medical Centre of Excellence, London,  
United Kingdom



Football is well resourced to provide state of the art rehabilitation facilities and to be at the cutting edge of rehabilitation from injury. Studies identified methods to quantify functional rehabilitation in football (Fuller CW, Walker J. Quantifying the functional rehabilitation of injured football players. Br J Sports Med 2006; 40(2): 151-157; discussion 151-157), however there remains a paucity of high quality evidence to show the effectiveness of football rehabilitation interventions and particular transference of these methods to the exercising population at large (Lohmander LS, Roos EM. The evidence base for orthopaedics and sports medicine. BMJ 2015; 350: g7835).

Studies increasingly recognise there are limitations to previously standard surgical procedures (Khan M, Evaniew N, Bedi A, Ayeni OR, Bhandari M. Arthroscopic surgery for degenerative tears of the meniscus: a systematic review and meta-analysis. CMAJ 2014; 186: 1057-1064; Sihvonen R, Paavola M, Malmivaara A, Itälä A, Joukainen A, Nurmi H, Nurmi H, Kalske J, Järvinen TL; Finnish Degenerative Meniscal Lesion Study (FIDELITY) Group. Arthroscopic partial meniscectomy versus sham surgery for a degenerative meniscal tear. N Engl J Med 2013; 369: 2513-2522) and evidence does not support the use of partial meniscectomy for degenerative medial meniscal tears, although this is a commonly undertaken procedure.

All injured players will require some rehabilitation, be they a non-surgical or surgical case.

Do we underestimate the power of rehabilitation in favour of a surgical approach?

Are coaches more accepting of a player being unavailable if they have surgery other than rehabilitation within the medical team?

Are medical teams reluctant to explore the full potential of rehabilitation from potential surgical cases for fear of failure?

The increased use of high technology imaging has helped to define and quantify injuries in football (Ekstrand J, Healy JC, Waldén M, Lee JC, English B, Häggglund M. Hamstring muscle injuries in professional football: the correlation of MRI findings with return to play Br J Sports Med 2012; 46: 112-117).

Is there a danger that this leads to a focus on treating anatomical variation rather than function? (Ofri D. The practice of medicine: neither science nor art. Lancet 2006; 367(9513): 807-808).

Clinical evaluation should be the mainstay of deciding the treatment approach, supplemented by appropriate imaging (Kienle GS, Kiene H. Clinical judgement and the medical profession. J Eval Clin Pract 2011; 17: 621-627).