

New study: Women less likely than men to fake soccer injuries

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With the Women's World Cup in full swing in Germany, soccer fans can now rest assured that women are less likely than men to fake on-field injuries, according to a new study by researchers at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center published in the July issue of the journal *Research in Sports Medicine*.

"Injuries are common in women's [soccer](#) and seem to be on the rise at the international level," said Daryl Rosenbaum, M.D., an assistant professor of Family and Community Medicine at Wake Forest Baptist. "The goals of our study were to determine the frequency of apparent [injury](#) incidents in women's international soccer and estimate what proportion of these incidents is authentic. It is clear from this study that female players don't fake injuries at the same rate as their male counterparts."

Rosenbaum said that in 2008, the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA), the international governing body of soccer, issued a directive calling for "the football family to unite in denouncing injury simulation and working to eradicate this scourge from the game." Results of a study conducted in 2010 by Rosenbaum show that the faking or exaggerating of injuries at the men's international level may be a valid concern. He hopes his research will help determine if injury simulation in soccer is due to the nature of the sport or is specific to certain types of participants.

For the latest study, video recordings of 47 televised games from two

international women's tournaments were reviewed to identify incidents in which a player behaved as if injured. Apparent injuries were considered "definite" if a player withdrew from participation within five minutes or if bleeding was visible; the remaining incidents were considered "questionable." A total of 270 apparent injuries were observed, a rate of 5.74 per game. The "definite" injury rate was only 0.78 per match compared to 4.96 for "questionable" injuries.

"While it was difficult to know for certain if a player had a true injury or was faking or embellishing, we found that only 13.7 percent of apparent injuries met our definition for a 'definite' injury," Rosenbaum said. "Also consider that we saw six apparent injuries per match in the 2007 Women's World Cup but team physicians from the tournament reported only 2.3 injuries per match, so it looks like there may be some simulation in the women's game."

Rosenbaum's research indicates that apparent injury incidents for women are much less frequent than for men, however, occurring at a rate of 5.74 per match as compared to 11.26 per men's match. The proportion of apparent injuries that were classified as "definite" was nearly twice as high for women, 13.7 percent, as compared to 7.2 percent for men.

Rosenbaum said "questionable" injuries are more likely to be associated with contact and referee sanctions than "definite" injuries, which may indicate that players may use these situations to try to deceive referees. There was no evidence that teams that did this frequently won more often, nor was there any evidence that players used injury simulation as a way to try and rest or kill time.

"In the end, I think this study shows that women are less likely than men to fake soccer injuries," Rosenbaum said. "What isn't clear is if injury simulation is used to gain a tactical advantage. Only the players

themselves know the answer to that question."

Provided by Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center

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