

Football injuries 12 times more frequent in competition than during training sessions

February 17 2015



Diego Moliner. Credit: Àlex Pérez

The risk of injury during competition matches is 12 times higher than during training sessions in players of the Professional Football League. The most common are muscular injuries and those resulting from overexertion, which imply recovery periods of around one week. These findings follow an extensive epidemiological study that analyses the characteristics of injuries to professional footballers in Spain conducted

by researchers at the Universitat Jaume I of Castellón, the Polytechnic University of Madrid and the University of Exeter (UK). The results have been published in the scientific journals Sports Sci and Sports Med Phys Fitness.

The research has systematically studied injuries sustained during an entire season for a total of 728 players from 16 first division teams and 11 second division teams.

Diego Moliner, director of the research group LIFE at the Universitat Jaume I, explains that in total 1,293 injuries were recorded in the first division and 891 in the second division, thus confirming an increased risk of injury during competition matches than during [training sessions](#). The overall incidence of injury among professional players from first and second division was 5.6 injuries per thousand hours of exposure. "But the most significant is that in the case of the competition, the number of injuries per thousand hours of practice was 41.7 versus 3.6 produced per thousand hours of training, which means that the risk of injury is almost 12 times higher during a competitive match." Nearly 90% of injuries occurred in lower limbs, and the primary cause was overexertion, which was the origin of three in four injuries. The most common types were muscle and tendon, which were registered in one in two cases.

Regarding the evolution during the season, the incidence of injury during [training](#) sessions was greater during the preseason and declined progressively during the competitive season, while the impact of injury during competition matches progressively increased throughout the season.

Among the key findings of the articles, the authors have highlighted the need to implement new protocols for preventing injuries that minimize the high economic and sporting cost it means for professional football

teams the high [injury](#) incidence among their players, especially during the preseason and end of the competitive period.

More information: Noya Salces J, Gomez-Carmona PM, Moliner-Urdiales D, Gracia-Marco L, Sillero-Quintana M. An examination of injuries in Spanish Professional Soccer League. *J Sports Med Phys Fitness*. 2014;54(6):765-71. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24787731

Provided by Asociacion RUVID

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