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The Cambridge protocol for the prevention and management of rib stress fractures in elite rowers**Helen Julia Lavelle**

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This paper reviews the latest hypotheses concerning the aetiology of rib injury and proposes reasoned prevention strategies. In addition to it, it explains a structured method to assess the severity of the lesion and therefore the likely period of interrupted training. Rib pain constitutes a major cause of training and competition days lost. It may afflict any rower but is a common injury in athletes training for more than seven sessions a week and can result in long periods of lay off. Rib pain lies within a continuum with an occult stress fracture needing 6 to 12 weeks to heal adequately to withstand intensive training whereas a minor periosteal reaction may settle in just a few days. The Cambridge protocol assessment tool helps the clinician determine the severity of the lesion and therefore how long the rower may need to recuperate. The Cambridge protocol guides the medical team looking after these patients through techniques to keep the athlete fit whilst unable to train fully and then a careful graduated return to normal training and competition. The paper will also review the issue of bone density and the evidence to support the use of Exogen (ultra sound bone stimulation) and spinal logic (electromagnetic energy) to accelerate bone healing and improve bone density.

Biography

Helen Julia Lavelle has completed her MCSP and MSc. She is an experienced Physiotherapist who has worked in Elite Sport at the highest level. She has worked in premiership rugby and cricket in the UK before her current role in rowing. She has lectured on many occasions both nationally and internationally and is best known for her work in knee rehabilitation. She has recently presented at the MAT fest conference on meniscal allograft transplantation and the national exhibition centre in Birmingham- rehabilitation post ACL reconstruction.

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