

2nd International Conference on

Sports Medicine and Fitness

April 18-20, 2016 Dubai, UAE

Return to play after injury in youth soccer: Where do growth and maturation fit into the picture?

Olivier Materne

Aspire Academy, Qatar

Traumatic injury related to youth soccer has been widely described in the literature, but scientific evidence on growth and maturation associated to epidemiological figures is still lacking. Adirim and Cheng (2003) reported that children engaged in sports involving activities such as jumping and cutting are at greater risk of growth related diseases. This type of problem is described as an overuse condition caused by the repetitive stress on the growth cartilage. In elite youth soccer, few studies have reported comprehensively on growth related injuries. This epidemiology report provides an outline of injuries associated with growth and maturation. Different to other literature, our study demonstrated more growth related injuries, less muscle injuries and a peak injury incidence in the U15. Injury free survival analysis showed a substantial greater hazard ratio for players during peak height velocity, suggesting that somatic maturation is a potential risk factor. Although incidence of traumatic injuries was greater in different maturity status groups, overuse injuries resulted in a longer lay-off. The potential detrimental effect of injury during the growth spurt, resulting in a long lay-off, should encourage load monitoring, variety in the training programme and appropriate recovery periods in the development programmes of adolescent players. Further longitudinal research is required to continue to explore injury risk, and injury management to optimise injury prevention and rehabilitation in elite youth soccer.

Biography

Olivier Materne is a member of the National Sports Medicine Program of Qatar. He is working as a senior football Physiotherapist in Aspire Academy and he is the Physiotherapist for the U19 Qatar National Football Team. He has over 15 years of experience in the field of youth soccer development and rehabilitation. He holds two Masters', one in strength and conditioning and other in science in football rehabilitation. He is currently a PhD student at Edge Hill University, Liverpool. His research interest is on youth soccer development, particularly growth and maturation, and their relationship with injury, prevention, field rehabilitation and return to play.

olivier.materne@aspetar.com

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