SPORT INJURY PREVENTION: WHAT PLACE FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTION?

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to determine the impact of some psychological factors (and mental skills) on the occurrence of sport injuries in elite Tunisian athletes. Athletes came from different national teams, both individual and team sports, who were chosen with reference to their medical records.

After having explained the goal of our study to the athletes and having obtained their approval, two groups were formed.

METHODS

The experimental group (GI) consisted of 30 athletes (16 females and 14 males), with an average age of 19.8 ± 2.3 yrs (mean ± SD), who had suffered at least 2 injuries during the course of the last season. The control group (G2), comprised 30 athletes (13 females and 17 males, 21.3 ± 1.7 yrs) who had been injury free also during the last season. Both groups had a clinical interview and were given a personality test (Cattel's 16PF5, 1993) and a specific sport test (Salmela's OMSAT3, 1992). Between group differences were assessed via a Students T-tests. Pearson Product Correlations were used to examine the relationships between different psychological variables and injury frequency. Statistical significance for both tests was set at the p<0.05 level.

RESULTS

From the OMSAT 3 significant between group differences were noted in self-confidence (p=0.000), fear control (p=0.000), stress reactions (p=0.001), relaxation (p=0.000), and focusing (p=0.000). The C (p<0.004) and the F (p<0.03) factors from the 16PF5 test also differed between groups. Injury frequency was negatively related to the stress reaction factor (r=-0.835; p=0.001) and positively related to the C factor (r=0.413; p=0.04), while their seriousness was related to the F factor 16PF (r=0.897; p=0.001).

DISCUSSION

Not only were there differences between groups in psychological skill factors, but some of these were also related to the occurrence of sport injuries but also on their gravity. Clinical interviews suggested that sport injuries may frequently result from a deeper psychological conflict.

CONCLUSION

The results obtained will enable implementation of a prevention system consisting of appropriate mental training and psychological follow up to reduce the occurrence of injuries in high level athletes.

Key words: Sport injuries

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