E-Poster

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Managing Return to Play for Professional Handball Players After Treatment for Superior Labral Tears

Topic: Specific Target Groups (Children, Women, Elderly, Athletes, Musicians, Refugees, Ethnic Groups, Workers, and Others)

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BACKGROUND

Overhead throwing athletes, including handball players, exhibit a heightened risk of shoulder pathology due to the substantial biomechanical stresses imposed during the throwing cycle. While traumatic instability may occur, superior labrum anterior-posterior (SLAP) lesions in this cohort are frequently the result of cumulative microtrauma from repetitive overhead activity. This study aims to evaluate the clinical outcomes and return to play rates of handball athletes undergoing rehabilitation for symptomatic, isolated SLAP tears

METHODS

A retrospective review was conducted on 56 consecutive patients from multiple professional handball organizations, all of whom presented with persistent shoulder pain that limited their competitive ability. Fifteen patients presented with SLAP lesions confirmed via magnetic resonance imaging. Treatment adhered to an algorithm designed to address scapular dyskinesia and glenohumeral internal rotation deficit (GIRD) secondary to posterior capsular tightness, with progression towards pain-free throwing. Treatment success was evaluated using two distinct criteria: return to play (RTP), defined in accordance with prior studies, and a more stringent "return to prior performance" (RPP) metric, requiring a return to the athlete's pre-injury level and quality of professional competition, as evidenced by individual performance statistics

RESULTS

Although initially unsuccessful with one rehabilitation approach, all 15 patients persevered with supervised physical therapy and ultimately completed the non-surgical treatment plan, allowing them to attempt a return to play. The RTP rate was 1/2 = 50% for the two goalkeepers, with a RPP rate of 1/2 = 50%. Among the six wing players, the RTP rate was 2/6 = 33.3% and the RPP rate was 1/6 = 16.7%. The seven back players achieved an RTP rate of 2/7 = 28.6% and an RPP rate of 1/7 = 14.3%

CONCLUSION

RTP and RPP rates were higher for goalkeepers compared to wing players, although back players had the lowest return rates overall. Given these results, nonsurgical treatment should be considered a valid option for professional handball players with SLAP lesions, as it can lead to acceptable RTP and RPP outcomes

Statement of Disclosures

None

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