

## Addressing Injury Rates in Athletes: The Need for a Comprehensive Approach

David W. Keeley\*

Department of Human Performance, Dance, and Recreation, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, USA

The world of sports is a constantly growing entity that brings together professionals from a range of fields. From sports technique and sports medicine practitioners to applied sport and theoretical sport scientists, a wide variety of professionals are available to assist athletes with the prevention, evaluation, treatment, and rehabilitation of sports injuries. Unfortunately, recent injury statistics seem to indicate that although there has been dramatic growth and support for athletes in recent years, there has yet to be a decline in the number of sports related injuries. Thus, there may exist a need for re-examining the current methodology associated with the study of sports medicine.

In recent years, evidence based medicine has gained widespread support in the research world. Because of this, there has been a rapid increase in the volume of Sports Medicine publications. However, many of these publications are specific for individual sports and/or analyze injury only from the perspective of one scientific area of study (e.g. – biomechanics, physiology, sports physiotherapy, etc...). Additionally, many of these recently published studies examine injury from only one of the four previously identified areas of interest (i.e. – prevention, evaluation, treatments, and rehabilitation). For instance, in the research area of applied sports science, research typically focuses on injury prevention while research in the area of sport physiotherapy typically focuses on either evaluation or treatment. This current method of study within the sports medicine fields of study seems to consistently provide only pieces of the injury puzzle without increasing the overall progress toward a better understanding of the total picture associated with sports injury.

To combat these issues in the field of Sports Medicine research, we must evolve toward a more comprehensive research approach. We must begin to establish research teams from all areas of Sports Medicine that are able to collaborate effectively to improve our understanding of not only how to prevent injury, but also to diagnose, treat, and rehabilitate injury as well. For these efforts to be as successful as we would like we must begin to move out of our comfort zones and demonstrate a

willingness to work hand-in-hand with professionals whose expertise is in fields other than our own. It is possible that it is only by doing these things that we will be able to develop the new perspectives necessary to provide our athletes the highest levels of support.

A second issue that must be addressed is the availability of the literature that may potentially arise from the development of these interdisciplinary research teams. Unfortunately, in the current publishing paradigm, much of the novel literature is not readily made available to the majority of Sports Medicine professionals. Thus, there is also a need for us to shift our publishing to those available open access journals and databases. Because these open access tools allow for the free dissemination of research findings to users, they can be extremely effective in facilitating communication between professionals in all areas of Sports Medicine research. In particular, the Journal of Sports Medicine and Doping Studies (<http://www.omicsonline.org/jsmdshome.php>) published by the OMICS group (<http://www.omicsonline.org/>) facilitates the open communication between all interested members of the Sports Medicine field. These particular sites, as well as similar sites maintained by other proponents of open access provide an opportunity to increase communication within the Sports Medicine field by also providing open access digital books, audio versions and their accurate translations of publications into a variety of languages, and social networking opportunities.

By focusing on the areas discussed in this editorial, we can begin to build the literature infrastructure necessary for members of the Sports Medicine profession to provide their athletes with both adequate and appropriate support. Although this may seem to be an imposing task, it is a task that appears to be necessary as the growth and development of both multi-discipline research teams and open access publications may prove to be the most effective methodology for adequately addressing the prevention, cause, treatment, and rehabilitation of sport related injury.

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**\*Corresponding author:** David W. Keeley, PhD, Department of Human Performance, Dance, and Recreation, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, USA, Tel: 575-646-5186; E-mail: [dwk0611@msn.com](mailto:dwk0611@msn.com)

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