19 COMPARISON OF INJURY IN IRAN NATIONAL JUNIOR AND YOUTH FOOTBALL PLAYERS

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Football is one of the most popular sports in the world, but the rate of injury in this sport is high. A limited number of studies on the incidence of injuries in football players of differing ages have been published. The aim of this study was to establish a profile of injury in Iran national junior and youth football players. The team physician recorded details of all injuries that occurred during both training and matches. A total of 29 injuries were documented across both age groups, which is equivalent to an incidence of 36.51 injuries per 1000 play hours, the injury frequency rate during competition (64.15) being significantly ($Z=2.51$, $p<0.05$) higher than training (29.75). There was no significant difference in injury frequency between two age groups (36.1 injuries (U15) vs 37.9 injuries (U19) per 1000 h) ($Z=0.05$, $p > 0.05$) but junior players (U15) received more injuries during competition than youth players (U19) (86.08 injuries vs 46.41 injuries per 1000 h matches) ($Z=2.43$, $p < 0.05$). Also there was no significant difference in injury frequency during training (29.6 injuries vs 30.45 injuries per 1000 h training) ($p > 0.05$). Midfielders sustained greater percentage of injuries (55.2%). Most injuries were located in the lower extremities (n = 23, 79.3%), with the majority affecting the groin(31%) and ankle (17.2%) followed by thigh (13.8%) and knee (10.3%). Strains (34.5%) were the most common type of injury sustained in all players followed by sprains (17.2%) and contusions (17.2%).The overall rate of injury acquisition in the present investigation was 36.51 per 1000 h of exposure, this result was higher than recently observed for elite French youth football players (4.8). Junior players (U15) had twice as many injuries per 1000 h of exposure than youth players (U19). It seems that youth players (U19) are better trained to meet the demands of playing games than are junior players (U15).