

SPORTS INJURIES' POSTAL SURVEY: DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED IN ASSESSMENT OF OUTCOME

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ABSTRACT

We present the results of a postal survey on the outcome of sports injuries treated in an Accident and Emergency Department which shows that this is unsuitable for assessing their outcome. There are, however, some points of interest relating to associated morbidity and satisfaction with treatment in the Accident and Emergency Department.

Key words: Sports injuries, Postal survey, Poor response, Morbidity

The management and outcome of sports injuries has become a topical subject in recent years. It would appear that more people are partaking of sporting activities during their increased leisure time. The treatment of sports injuries begins with first aid at the scene of the event and this is an important aspect of sports injury management (Walkden, 1981). The majority of people presenting to an Accident and Emergency Department with a sports injury are within the young, fit category and of working age, thus an injury at sport may lead to a period both of time off work and away from the sport (Pickard et al, 1987). We tried to assess the outcome of sports injuries by means of a postal survey and report the difficulties encountered.

Patients and Methods

The Western Infirmary houses one of five Accident and Emergency Departments in the Greater Glasgow area which has a population of approximately one million, a quarter of which is covered by the Western Infirmary. Within the catchment area there are numerous football and rugby clubs, an ice rink and numerous squash, tennis and athletic clubs. The study confined itself to patients over the age of 12 years as childhood injuries are dealt with at the adjacent Sick Children's Hospital. We studied one thousand consecutive patients who attended the Accident and Emergency Department of the Western Infirmary between 18th August, 1985 and 24th April, 1986 and had sustained an injury at sport. Each of these patients, on leaving the department, was given a questionnaire and a stamped addressed envelope in which to return the questionnaire to us on completion, and was given a full explanation of its purpose and great emphasis was put on the importance of returning it. Our initial impression was that the great majority of patients were more than willing to comply.

The questionnaire attempted to establish:—

1. Satisfaction with treatment in the Accident and Emergency Department.
2. The number of patients who had treatment outwith the Accident and Emergency Department.
3. The number of days off sport.
4. The number of days off work.

Results

Despite our efforts we were disappointed to receive only

384 replies (38.4%).

Table I shows the sports involved and the number of respondents.

TABLE I

Sport	Number of Participants	Number of Replies
Football	532	171
Rugby	132	58
Hockey	37	21
Golf	9	3
Horse riding	5	2
Boxing	5	2
Jogging	28	7
Swimming	9	6
Squash	18	11
Cricket	4	1
Martial Arts	43	18
Netball	16	10
Skiing	56	33
Other	108	51
Total	1000	384

Of those who expressed an opinion on the quality of treatment, 332 were satisfied and only 22 were dissatisfied.

Of those who stated their requirement for further treatment, 81 sought further treatment and 296 were satisfied.

Time off sport is shown in Table II.

TABLE II

Time off sport.

Time	0 days	2 days	2-7 days	1-2 weeks	2-3 weeks	3-4 weeks	4 weeks or more
Number of participants	17	19	105	77	45	27	92

Overall a total of 382 people lost 8,842 days off sport, which is an average of 23.15 days/person.

TABLE III

Time off work.

Time	0 days	2 days	2-7 days	1-2 weeks	2-3 weeks	3-4 weeks	4 weeks or more
Number of participants	270	36	34	20	5	4	15

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 Mr. M. Pickard
 Registrar
 Accident & Emergency Department
 Western Infirmary
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Time off work is shown in Table III.

A total of 384 people lost a total of 1,515 days which is an average of 3.95 days/person.

Discussion

The response to the postal survey was low and does not lead us to make firm conclusions. In view of the deliberate efforts made by us we were surprised by this low response. In our consecutive study we had included all sport related injuries no matter how casually sustained or trivial in nature. We suspect many of those in these categories disregarded the importance of the questionnaire. We believe that there is a general lethargy in responding to questionnaires.

However, of the response we did have, the following is of interest. It would appear that the vast majority of patients who replied were satisfied with the treatment which they received in our Accident and Emergency Department.

There was surprisingly little time lost off work, an average of 3.95 days compared to the time lost off sport

which was 23.15 days. Nevertheless, it is a significant number of days lost from work considering the reason for absenteeism was participation in leisure activity.

We believe it is important and there is a need to assess the outcome of treatment given to a particular group of patients in an Accident and Emergency Department. The postal survey carried out for consecutive sports related injury was not satisfactory in doing so in our area.

Acknowledgements

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References

- Burry, H. C., 1986 "Care of Sports Injuries in New Zealand — Who Pays?". NZ Med.J. 99: 240-242.
 Pickard, M. A. D., Tullett, W. M. and Patel, A. R., 1987 "Sports Injuries: An Epidemiological Study". Scot.Med.J. In press.
 Walkden, L., 1981 "Immediate Management of Injuries". Brit.J.Sports Medicine 11: 68-70.

BOOK REVIEW

Title: 1985 YEAR BOOK OF SPORTS MEDICINE
Editors: J. L. Krakauer, J. L. Anderson, F. George, R. J. Shephard and J. S. Torg
Publishers: Year Book Medical Publishers Inc., Chicago. UK Agents — Blackwell Scientific, Oxford
 Price £41.00 hardback 498 pages Subject and author indices ISBN 0-8151-5159-4 ISSN 0162-0908

The growth of interest in sports medicine is mirrored by the increase in the number of articles abstracted, an increase of forty pages compared with the 1984 edition and ninety pages compared with the 1981 edition. This is the seventh annual edition of this most useful reference work and contains abstracts of approximately one page derived from articles published up to the end of 1984. The papers included are in the fields of exercise physiology, general medicine, biomechanics, trauma, and special groups such as women and children. Although they include an increasing number from the UK the majority are from the USA. Special attention has been paid to injuries in boxing, a sport the editors appear to want banned, and to decalcification of bone in post-menopausal women and in young women who are amenorrhoeic.

I consider that the year books are a most useful means of keeping up to date and of finding sources easily for research workers and clinicians. Annual subscription should be an essential library expenditure for any institution where there is a sports medicine or exercise physiology unit. The review copy will be lodged, with other BASM books, in the library of the London Sports Medicine Institute at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, Charterhouse Square.

H. E. Robson