OPINION

Long-term effects of sport: preventing and managing OA in the athlete

Kim Bennell, David J. Hunter & Bill Vicenzino About the authors

Sports participation is associated with an increased risk of future osteoarthritis (OA), much of which results from joint injury. No strong evidence exists that moderate sporting activity in the presence of normal joints predisposes to OA. Whether high-level participation in sport, particularly impact-type sports, is truly associated with OA is unclear owing to difficulties in differentiating the confounding effect of joint injury. Attention to strategies that prevent joint injury in athletes is paramount. Evidence does support the use of targeted neuromuscular exercise programmes, ankle taping and/or bracing and equipment or rule changes to prevent joint injuries in athletes. Optimal injury management, including rehabilitation and surgery if appropriate, is needed to facilitate healing and address biomechanical and neuromuscular impairments to reduce the risk of re-injury and minimize the
onset and extent of joint symptoms. Management of OA in athletes requires attention to load-reducing strategies, activity modification, muscle strengthening and weight control.

Author affiliations

K. Bennell, D. J. Hunter & B. Vicenzino
Department of Physiotherapy, Centre for Health, Exercise and Sports Medicine, University of Melbourne, 200 Berkeley Street, Carlton, VIC 3053, Australia (K. Bennell). Rheumatology Department, Royal North Shore Hospital, University of Sydney, Pacific Highway, St Leonards, NSW 2065, Australia (D. J. Hunter). CCRE Spine, Division of Physiotherapy, School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Queensland, Brisbane St Lucia, QLD 4072, Australia (B. Vicenzino).

Correspondence to: K. Bennell k.bennell@unimelb.edu.au

Published online 31 July 2012