

Lack of utilizing evidence based training protocols for fitness training and injury prevention in athletes: The need to promote sports physical therapy in Pakistan

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Sir,

Sports physical therapy is a specialized field that is growing in cultures that strive to foster an active lifestyle and athletic excellence.(1) Sports physical therapy incorporates scientific knowledge, skills and attitudes for the context of practice as a sports physical therapist whereas Sports physical therapist provide evidence based rehabilitation and treatment of injuries.(2) They also support athletic performance through injury prevention, improving, recovery and maintenance interventions.

Pakistan's sports momentum has been rising recently. For the first time, male football team won a qualifying game in 2023. Many clubs and academies are being opened day by day yet the lack of qualified trainers and proper training programs persist. In context of sports in Pakistan, insufficient data is available about programs and structures related to development of sports in Pakistan. Furthermore, Pakistan's sports policy revealed administrative inefficiencies, ineffective management, and failure to adapt to modern international standards which hinders the development of the country's sports system.(3)

Concerns regarding lack of appropriate level of fitness among Pakistani athletes have also been raised. (4) Such fitness related problems could have been tackled by initiating fitness training early during the course when young players are being recruited in the sports club way before when they make their debut.

Another issue is the common practices of exhaustion based training by many coaches and athletes to boost stamina and strengthen musculature. There is a believe that performing sprinting sessions at the end of a

regular practice session or game when fatigue level is high, has more profound effect on enhancing stamina. Training more than the requirement of the body leads to over- training syndrome. Over- training syndrome (OTS) occurs when excessive exercise leads to an imbalance between fatigue and post-exercise rest, resulting in skeletal muscle weakness rather than strength, increasing injury risks and a decline in player performance.(5) Insufficient resting intervals after training further add on to more impaired recovery patterns among athletes.

Considering above stated facts, the necessity of ensuring availability of sports physical therapist in sports clubs and academies cannot be over stated. Sports physical therapists are equipped with extensive and evidence-based knowledge needed for maintaining and improving cardio-respiratory fitness and muscular strength of athletes. They also provide post-injury rehabilitation and reduce injury risks thereby decreasing the time spent outside the sports and minimize the cost of medical treatment expenses. Hence, sports physical therapy is crucial for maintaining the health and performance of the athletes who are the future stars of our country.

Keywords: Evidence based practice, Fitness training, Sports, Sports physical therapy, Over-training syndrome.

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