

Role of Physiotherapy in Sports

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of the role of physical activity in disease prevention and health promotion is well documented. There are strong recommendations for the intensity and frequency of physical activity that everyone should aim to achieve throughout life to maintain health. Being active and keeping active are important whether one is young or old, able bodied or disabled, male or female. Physical activity and exercise not only maintain fitness, they also improve mental health

Physiotherapists specialize in developing and maintaining people's ability to move and function throughout their lives. With an advanced understanding of how the body moves and what keeps it from moving well, physiotherapists promote wellness, mobility and independence. As exercise experts, especially in the treatment of long term and chronic conditions, physiotherapists provide services for a wide range of people to optimize their physical activity. They prescribe exercise as part of a structured, safe and effective programmed. (Bulley, C, & Donaghy, M. 2004)

The scope of practice for physiotherapist in various areas is well known to everybody. Physiotherapist assesses, treats and manages a wide variety of injuries including ailments from the fields of orthopedics, neurology, respiratory and thoracic, cardio-vascular, obstetrics, sports medicine, pediatrics, geriatrics, intensive care units and general rehabilitation. Other medical fields and community care also falls within the scope of physiotherapy (www.hpcs.co.za).

Physiotherapists treat different types of sports injuries, which include muscle, ligament and tendon injuries, muscle fascia abnormalities, backache, muscle spasm, headache and fractures after they have been fully treated by the doctor. The most common injuries that are seen in sports are those of the ankle and the knee (Verhagen, Van Tulder, Van der Beek, Bouter and Van Mechelen, 2005).

A sports physiotherapist is a recognized professional who demonstrates advanced competencies in the promotion of safe physical activity participation, provision of advice, and adaptation of rehabilitation and training interventions, for the purposes of preventing injury, restoring optimal function, and contributing to the enhancement of sports performance, in athletes of all ages and abilities (Bennett, C. & Grant, M, 2004)while ensuring a high standard of professional and ethical practice.

SPORTS PHYSIOTHERAPIST: A DESCRIPTION:

Sports physiotherapists are professionals who aspire to work at master's level. Sports physiotherapists work with athletes of all ages and abilities, at individual and group levels, to prevent injury, restore optimal function and contribute to the enhancement of sports performance, using sports-specific knowledge, skills and attitudes to achieve best clinical practice. Sports physiotherapists are pioneers in their field, critically challenging and evaluating practice, developing new knowledge through research, and disseminating this understanding to initiate changes in practice. In their role as a professional leader, sports physiotherapists influence their professional and multidisciplinary cultures by keeping up to date with new innovations, incorporating them into education, and creating a professional environment that enables the implementation of best practice. They aim to promote safe participation in physical activity, and the sports physiotherapy profession, to the wider community and facilitate international mobility of therapists through education and practice.

The basic function of a Physiotherapist in Sport is the application of treatment by physical means: electrical, thermal, mechanical, hydraulic, and manual therapeutic exercises with special techniques. The Physiotherapist in Sport focuses its objectives in the field of sport and physical activity.

The Physiotherapist in Sport has the following specific functions:

Outreach in Sport: Physiotherapist will advise the sports people and professionals linked to it and perform any actions that help improve the conditions of avoidance of injury to the athlete.

Prevention: The Physiotherapist in Sport should be alert to avoid as far as possible all those factors that might bring up injuries by sports in general and of each particular sport, associated injuries and / or consequences of injury primary, and its possible recurrence.

Recovery: The Physiotherapist in Sport should regain the functionality of the athlete as quickly as possible, accelerating the biological processes of recovery from injury, limiting his training as little as possible and ensure that they are reinstated with the greatest prospects for success.

Rehabilitation: The Physiotherapist in Sport, after recovering from injury, put all his knowledge on making the athlete begins his sport in the physical conditions more appropriate, and as similar as possible to those presented before the injury.

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Teaching: The Physiotherapist in Sport should aim to improve all these facets of knowledge that contribute to the training of top professionals in this field, both as a Graduate Degree.

Research: Physiotherapist in Sport conducted all studies contributing to expand and develop expertise in Sport Physiotherapy.

Responsibilities of a Physiotherapist in rehabilitation of a sportsperson:

- Assessment and Treatment of acute and chronic injuries on rest days.
- Stretching before training or matches.
- Muscle activation before training and matches.
- Pre-match strapping / treatments.
- Medical cover at training sessions and matches.
- Medical screening and injury prevention.
- Liaising with management regarding the severity of injuries and the conditioning of the team.
- Referral for Scans / Surgery.
- Rehabilitation of the injured player.
- Recovery sport massages, hydrotherapy pool sessions and recovery ice-baths or contrast baths after matches.
- Psychological support during tournaments and matches.

Role of sports physiotherapist in antidoping programmes:

- To be knowledgeable of and comply with all antidoping policies.
- To cooperate with the athlete testing program.
- To encourage athletes to uphold anti-doping values and anti-doping attitudes and to support compliance with anti-doping rules.

- Sports Physiotherapists should be aware of the fact that if an athlete is of substantial assistance in discovering or establishing anti-doping rule violations by athlete support personnel, the period of ineligibility of the athlete may be eliminated or reduced.
- Sports Physiotherapists should be conscious of the fact that administration of doping could constitute an anti-doping violation on the athlete's part, even if the athlete was unaware of what was being administered.
- Sports Physiotherapists must be aware of the fact that nutritional supplements can be contaminated as a result of which ingestion by an athlete could unintentionally lead to a positive test result.

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