



THE EFFICIENCY OF COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL THERAPY IN REHABILITATION PROCESS OF THE INJURED ATHLETES - A REVIEW

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Abstract

Sport injuries threaten athletes' career and success and determine rehabilitation costs. The purpose of this paper is to underline the psychological effects of sports injury and the efficiency of cognitive-behavioral therapy in rehabilitation process of the injured athletes. In a study concerning the psychological aspects of sport-injury rehabilitation, Brewer (2003) concluded that psychological factors play an integral role in the recovery and rehabilitation from sport injury.

Cognitive-behavioral therapy is aimed to educate people to change their philosophy of life, to think rationally in order to cope effectively with negative mental states.

Keywords: *Cognitive-behavioral therapy, athletes injury, sport psychology.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Participation in different types of athletics has increased over time, as has the incidence of athletic injury among such athletes. An injury affects physical capabilities, but also determines negative emotions and other mood disturbances, so during the rehabilitation process the intervention of a psychologist is recommended.

Becoming injured and fast recovering from injury are common outcomes of participation in all kind of performance sports. Taking in consideration the negative physiological effects of injury, psychological effects have also been found to negatively affect injured athletes. Factors such as stress, anxiety, and depression

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are among the most known outcomes associated with injury.

Researches made by sports medicine professionals found that approximately 5%-13% of injured athletes experience different levels of psychological distress (Cupal & Brewer, 2001; Wiese-Bjornstal, Shaffer, 1999).

Cognitive-behavioral therapy is one of the most used method for helping people suffering from stress, anxiety, depression to deal with emotional difficulties, to overcome their negative thinking patterns and replace them with healthier, more efficient thoughts (Rizeanu 2012, 2014).

This paper aims to discuss the psychological symptoms athletes players experience when injured during the games, as well as possible cognitive-behavioral therapy techniques the kinesiologist and sport psychologist can implement when working with injured athletes.

2. THE LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a lack in the literature about sport injuries and their consequences and few psychological studies on sport injury prevention.

Gustafsson, Lundqvist and Tod (2017) published a case study in which they presented the most efficient cognitive-behavioral procedures recommended to treat anxiety problems in sports: behavioral analysis, psycho-education and exposure.

The original stress-injury model developed by Andersen and Williams (1988) proposes that when sport participants experience a stressful situation their personality characteristics, history of stressors and coping resources contribute to the stress response.

In a study concerning the psychological aspects of sport-injury rehabilitation, Brewer (2003) concluded that psychological factors play an integral role in the recovery and rehabilitation from sport injury.

Research conducted by Asken (1999) has shown that the psychological responses to injury, such as stress, anxiety or depression are amplified in cases of severe injury and lead to the increasing of the rehabilitation process. Stress is a factor that negatively affects the individual, both on the psychological and physiological level (Rizeanu, Mihăilă, 2015).

A study conducted by Mittly, Németh, Berényi and Mintál (2006) showed that in order to an earlier return to their sport activity, injured athletes need psychological interventions as well as social support in their post-injury period.

Andersen (2009) found that cognitive-behavioral techniques are effective in helping athletes to control irrational cognitions or negative emotions and behaviours. The use of rational emotive behavior therapy in sport helps athletes eradicate dysfunctional thought processes and emotions, as it help people in any other domain (Rizeanu, 2012, 2014). The studies conducted by Bernard (1985),

Elko and Ostrow (1991), Yamauchi and Murakoshi (2001), Lerner and his collaborators (2007), Si and Lee (2008), Marlow (2009), Turner and Barker (2013), Nippert and Smith (2008) and Bratu (2014) showed the efficiency of applicability of REBT in sports.

Sordoni, Hall and Forwell (2000) conducted a study which concluded that cognitive-behavior therapy techniques, especially imagery can be helpful in the rehabilitation period of injured athletes.

Using CBT techniques such as relaxation and mindfulness-based practices when working with injured athletes can shorten the period of rehabilitation, considering that post injury depression rates are ranging from 5% to 21% and such strategies could lead to decreased depression (Manuel, Shilt, Curl et. al., 2002).

Increasing evidence supports the use of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) for injured basketball players with chronic pain and researches concluded that physical therapists should incorporate CBT techniques when treating these patients (Thorn, Cross, Walker, 2007). The results of the study conducted by Naoi (2003) concerning the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral interventions on negative emotions of injured athletes showed improvements in the mood of the participants of the study.

Brewer (2017) stated that “psychological readiness to return to sport after injury is an emerging concept that cuts across cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses to sport injury.” In a study concerning the stressors and psychological responses to sport injury, Rees (2010) concluded that the performance standard of the athletes can influence the relationship between psychological responses and stressors to sport injury.

REBT is an effective intervention aimed to reduce irrational beliefs of injured athletes and their performance anxiety and to improve competitive performance in sport (Wood et al., 2016).

3. CONCLUSIONS

Sport psychology is a relatively new field of science and researches concluded that around 19% of athletes should experience a negative psychological impact of their suffered sport injury (Chan, Michelli, Smith et al, 2006; Clanton, Matheny, Jarvis & Jeronimus, 2012). The stress, frustration and anxiety are not generated by the seriousness of the injury, but the insecurity whether how long the recovery would take (Hamson-Utley, Martin, & Walters, 2008; Rizeanu, Bratu, Rizeanu, 2017).

An effective rehabilitation process should comprise the treatment of anxiety and depression of the athletes, which is also related to the possible recurrence of the injury (Baum, 2005; Bratu, 2012, 2013).

This paper is aimed to analyze the psychological symptoms of athletes experience as a result of becoming injured and the most effective psychological techniques which can be used during their rehabilitation process. Cognitive-behavioral therapy techniques such as relaxation, cognitive-restructuring and mindfulness are most recommended by the clinicians.

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