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Title: An Exploration of the Experiences of Returning to Sport Post Anterior Cruciate Ligament Reconstruction.

Background:

Existing literature generally agrees that less than 50% of individuals return to their pre-injury sport post anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) reconstruction. Whilst the physical ability of the repaired knee has often been examined, there must be additional factors affecting resumption of sport. This is pertinent to clinicians because it may highlight further elements that need to be addressed in rehabilitation to maximise return-to-sport outcomes post ACL reconstruction, but there appears to be an absence of an in-depth examination on this subject using focus group research.

Aims:

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the experiences of returning to sport after an ACL reconstruction. In addition, it aims to gain an in-depth knowledge of individuals' thoughts, feelings and the barriers and opportunities that might affect participation.

Design and Methodology:

This phenomenological study was conducted using a focus group with a purposive sample of students from the University of Leicester who had undergone an ACL reconstruction. Once the data had been collected, the discussion was transcribed verbatim, and thematic analysis was adopted to identify themes.

Results:

Two overarching themes emerged from the data; fear and rehabilitation. Fear was divided into the sub-themes as follows; fear of re-injury, fear of the long-term consequences and fear of the knee's reduced physical capabilities. Rehabilitation was broken down into five sub-themes; physiotherapy, NHS vs private rehabilitation, education, participation in alternative sports and time-consuming rehabilitation.

Conclusion:

Multiple barriers inhibiting return to sport have been highlighted but further opportunities in aiding recommencement can be developed from the ideas proposed in this study. Rehabilitation should involve interventions to address the psychological and physical elements that are frequently associated with ACL reconstruction. Ensuring goals are patient-centred, encouraging participation in alternative sports and educating individuals on the realistic time-frames for recuperation can help to maximise the potential for resuming pre-injury sport.