OBJECTIVES

• Identify at-risk athletes for developing mental health issues.

• Recognize some diagnostic tools/techniques that may help identify athletes who may be experiencing mental health symptoms.

• Select ways to assist the athlete to minimize mental health concerns.

RELEVANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH

THE ATHLETE

- 3 Components: Mind-Body-Spirit
- Olympic motto:
  - Citius
  - Altius
  - Fortius

ATHLETIC IDENTITY: THE STRENGTH WITH WHICH PEOPLE IDENTIFY WITH & EMBRACE THEIR ROLE AS AN ATHLETE.

THE PANDEMIC

- Turbulent impact on every level of sports participation:
  - Stripping one's identity
  - Physical, emotional, psychological impact.
Mental Health

Psychological Issues

- Injury related
  - Direct: An athlete’s impact on ability to perform
  - Indirect: Treatment
- Psychological:
  - Resilience
  - Recovery
- Return to play
- Long-term effects

Non-Injury Related

- Psychiatric: History of mental health condition
- Substance: Treatment
- Conjoint management strategies
- Return to play

Mental Health

- The discussion will center on the athlete’s response and ability to cope with strategies unique to their recovery from a high-stress sport, to the mental health perspective.

- The ongoing nature of mental health issues that may be part of the fabric of the athlete’s personal life are equally as important but are beyond the scope of this discussion.
**WHY SPORTS?**

- Personality
- Permeates all challenge
- "Exoskeleton"
- Involvement in a system
- Important on social team
- "Be ourselves, who we are" – Definition of identity

**SCENARIOS**

**12 YO M D-I FB RUNNING BACK**
- Patella fracture
- ACL, MCL, MTF in same season
- Amputation

**15 YO F HS SOCCER DEFENDER**
- Anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) in same season
- "Surgical" with multiple surgical procedures
- Chondral flap
- ACL, LCL, MCL, posterior tibial tendon
- ACL, MCL, lateral collateral ligament
- Patella and patellar ligament

**14 YO F MULTISPORT (B-ALL)**
- Multiple compartment lesions
- Arthritic changes
- Spontaneous patellar lift
- Unable to complete high school season
- Cannot continue to play basketball with emotional ability

**62 YO M MASTERS-CLASS TRIATHLETE**
- Multiple surgery for ligaments
- Allocation for knee, ankle, elbow, fingers, shoulder
- "Too much" for surgery to lift
- "I did it with an scarified microvascular" with surgery
- "Triathletes continue to train and have success"
**THE EVENT**

**WHAT CONSTITUTES RECOVERY?**

**Is it...**
- Return to play?
- Simon or compartmented?
- Acceptance of modified role?
- "Walk away" approach?
- "Lost" of modified?

**It is...**
- **Healing moment**
  - Constitutive
    - Addressing the injury
    - Assessing the options
    - Accepting physical, emotional & mental
    - Addressing long-term mental aspects

**IMPORTANCE**

- From now on than ever, injury and post-injury care are not only about returning to play but also about the mental health of the athlete. Mental health is one of the pillars of stability.

Psychological stage models

- O'Connor (2005)
  - Affective cycle of injury
    - Denial
    - Anger
    - Acceptance

- Maintaining the concept of different emotional phases
- Could not follow a predetermined sequence; instead, moved flexibly

Psychological stage models

- Denial
  - Athlete measures and creates the cognitive structure of the injury

- Distress
  - Negative feedback external from the injury

- Acceptance (personal model year)

- Determined coping
  - Overcoming the injuries, attitudes, and thoughts carried over into the situation
  - Cultivating resilience through realistic (not over-optimistic) thoughts, commitments
  - Maintaining emotional attitudes to gain success

Consensus

Psychological issues related to injury in athletes and the team physician: A consensus statement

CONSENSUS

PERSONALITY FACTORS

• Perfectionism
• Inflexible/Inflexible
• Obsessive/Compulsive
• Introversion/Extroversion

MOTIVATION
Supportive social network
Supportive family/significant other relationships
Competition

ENVIRONMENTAL
Weather conditions
Wind/field conditions
Equipment
Failure

PREVENTION
Caloric/food plan
Injury

EMOTIONAL
Comprehension

PHYSICAL
Compromised conditioning
Foot technique
Ankle mechanics/muscle tone (lower extremity)
Nutritional
Caloric/food plan
Injury

PSYCHOLOGICAL ANTECEDENTS

FACTORS THAT MAY CONTRIBUTE TO THE RISK OF ATHLETIC INJURY

CCSU Sports Medicine Symposium - March 2021
"INJURY PRONE" PERSONALITY TYPE

There is none...

WHAT, THEN, IS THE LINK?

One word:

STRESS

"Situational demands that exceed the available resources to respond to those demands"

• High levels of stress on and off the field increase the athlete’s risk of injury
• High levels of stress combined with low capacity of coping as even minor stressors can lead to injury
• Increased muscle tension
• Coordination difficulties
PSYCHOLOGICAL REACTION TO INJURY

- Inappropriate follow-up medical information.
- Try to understand significance of the event.
- Unpredictable sequence of events.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF INJURY REHABILITATION

- Comprehensive program addressing psychological factors and emotional reactions.
- Emotional reactions should be focused on understanding symptoms.

COMPROMISED ADJUSTMENT

Warning signs:

- Unreasonable fear of injury.
- Persistent denial of injury severity.
- Withdrawal.
- Guilt.

- Inflexibility.
- Isolation.
- Rapid mood swings.
- Overcome symptom question of return to play.
ESSENTIAL FACTORS

• Trust Athlete
• Educate Athlete
• Communicate Information
• Practice Athlete for Recovery Process
• Encourage Coping Skills

COPING SKILLS

• Creating opportunities that serve to enhance recovery

COPING TECHNIQUES

• Cognitive-based techniques
  • Thought Stopping
  • Thought Replacement
  • Imagery
  • Positivity
COPING TECHNIQUES

- Somatic-based techniques
- Breathing exercises
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Relaxation techniques
- Sensory reconditioning techniques
- COACHING TECHNIQUES
- Stress management training

RETURN TO PLAY

- Physical recovery
  - Injury profile adequately addressed
  - Athlete trained on strength conditioning protocols and sport-specific testing
- Psychological recovery
  - "Readiness"
  - Appropriateness confidence
  - Athlete's emotional health
MENTAL HEALTH NETWORKS

- Athletic Care Network
  - Team Physician
  - Athletic Trainer
  - Coach/Staff
  - Traumatologist

- Social Care Network
  - Family
  - Support/Guardian
  - Friends/Peers
  - Religious/Belief

MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS

- Supporting Network is usually effective in assisting in recovery
- Promotes, persistence, or worsening symptoms requires specialty focus

- Potential to licensed mental health providers
  - Psychologist
  - Sport and Exercise Psychologist
  - Performance Enhancement
  - Life Skills Training

HOW INJURY AFFECTS MENTAL HEALTH

EMOTIONAL RESPONSES

- Sadness
- Isolation
- Anger
- Fear/Dread
- Lack of Motivation
- Frustration
- Appetite/Anorexia
- Sleep Disturbance
- Disengagement
INJURY & MENTAL HEALTH

- Psychological response to injury
- Can trigger or manifest mental health issues
- Risk of post-traumatic stress disorder

Note: Some reactions to injury are normal.

Specific concerns:

- Expression of anger
- Sense of failure
- Sense of invulnerability
- Compromised quality of life

Conclusions:

- Time to recovery & RTP are crucial
- Mental, emotional, physical health
- Countermeasures to mitigate mental illness
- Preinjury preparation

Permissions to reuse:

- CTS

Change of the health care team

- Address mental health issues
- Allow students to address injuries with confidence

Great for coaches, medical staff, therapists, and everyone.

Rapid access to help team player in health.
ARE WE PREPARED?

- Athletic training education competencies.
- Psychological strategies and referral.
- Athletes may navigate those emotions, social, emotional, & mental health resources & be able to optimize & attend to needs.

PSYCHOSOCIAL ASPECTS OF ATHLETIC INJURY

Athletic trainers’ perspective

- Athletes may need psychological examinations that athletes experience as a result of injury.
- What can explain psychological strategies within injury? ATPs stressed importance of learning more.

PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS

Athletic trainers’ skills in identifying & managing psychological distress

- Accurately identify, diagnose, & manage psychological distress.
- Frequently referred to other providers.
- Understand responsibilities & current implementing psychological techniques.
- Request additional practical experiences during coursework.
FROM THE ATHLETE'S PERSPECTIVE

- Athlete relies on & engages with sports medicine professionals (SMP) for:
  - Treatment
  - Guidance
  - Advice

FROM THE ATHLETE'S PERSPECTIVE

- Athlete self-regulation
  - Ability of the athlete to manage thoughts, feelings and emotions
  - Develop strategies to achieve long-term objectives

- Athlete supported SMP involvement with:
  - Goal-setting
  - Social support

THE ATHLETE-PROVIDER RELATIONSHIP

- Communication
- Open dialogue
- Support

- Goal-setting
- Assist in athlete self-regulation
- Optimal balance of physical, psychosocial, performance, & lifestyle goals
- Enhance trust & support
- Adjust to the "context" of the process (control)
Social (Un)distancing: Teammate Interactions, Athletic Identity, and Mental Health of Student-Athletes During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Scott Graupensperger, Ph.D., Alex J. Benson, Ph.D., Jason R. Kilmer, Ph.D., and M. Blair Evans, Ph.D.

The "NEW NORMAL"

Psychological
- "Belongingness" is a fundamental human need
- Protective against depression
- Protective against anxiety
- Protective against social anxiety

Physical distancing does not necessitate social distancing

Teammate Social Interactions
- Social support
- Community

Mental health associated with
- Teammate social support
- Community
- Teammate athletic identity

Physical distancing does not necessitate social distancing

COVID-19 PANDEMIC
MENTAL HEALTH MANAGEMENT DURING COVID-19

“UPHEAVAL”
• Antidote
• Reacting to delayed effects
• Proactive, reactive approach

“SILVER-LINING”
• Take on the challenge out of necessity
• Be part of the solution, not the problem
• Enhance creativity

MENTAL HEALTH MANAGEMENT DURING COVID-19

- Address
  - Psychotherapy
  - Pharmacotherapy
  - Higher level of care
MENTAL HEALTH MANAGEMENT DURING COVID-19

- Psychological Health
  - Use of technology & online services to remain connected & socially engaged
  - Telehealth
  - Medication management
  - Higher level of care

- Physical activity beneficial for mental health
- Physical symptoms associated with mental health issues

Higher level of care

- Pandemic can worsen symptoms
  - Anxiety
  - OCD
  - PTSD
  - Depression
  - Suicide