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## 'Ankle sprains often not treated properly'

[Posted: Fri 18/09/2009 by Niall Hunter, Editor]

Sprained ankles are often treated inadequately or not treated at all, often resulting long-term ankle problems, a Canadian expert has told a conference in Dublin.

And the conference was told of the tremendous pressure on top-level sports participants to return to playing too early after ankle injuries.

Dr Robert Petrella of the University of Western Ontario said people who suffer a sprained ankle often sprain their ankle again, and a recurrence rate of more than 40% has been reported in studies.

Dr Petrella said an estimated 50% to 60% of sports participants with ankle sprains do not seek professional treatment.

He said there are three grades of ankle sprain involving mild tearing, partial tearing or rupture of the ligament.

Dr Petrella said that if not treated properly, grade one and two sprains in particular can lead to significant future ankle problems and even a risk of osteoarthritis.

He said between 20% and 40% of all ankle sprains can lead to some form of chronic symptoms in the future.

The current standards therapy for ankle sprains is RICE - rest, ice, compression and elevation, in addition to pain-killing medication and physiotherapy to strengthen ligaments and muscles.

Ankle sprains often recur

Dr Petrella said these were all effective for pain and swelling but had a limited impact on recovery time.

He pointed to new research he had undertaken which has shown that hyaluronic acid (HA) injected into the ankle shortly after the time of the sprain can speed the recovery time post-sprain and can protect against future ankle sprains.

This injection is now available in Ireland and according to Dr Petrella, used in conjunction with existing standard therapy, it can help accelerate recovery after ankle sprain, with fewer days missing from sport and fewer recurrent ankle sprains.

He was speaking at the Scientific Conference of the Faculty of Sports and Exercise Medicine at the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin.

Also speaking at the conference, Dr Phillip Carolan, Dean of the Faculty and doctor to the Cavan senior Gaelic football team, said more needed to be done to prevent ankle injuries in GAA players.

He said footwear needed to be looked at, along with landing and body movement strategies to help prevent injuries.

All-Ireland winning football manager and player with Dublin, Dr Pat O' Neill, said there is incredible pressure on players today to return to playing competitively before ankle injuries have properly healed.

"This, coupled with intense and frequent training schedules, can lead to musculoskeletal problems including recurrent instability of the ankle joint and secondary bone damage."

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