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Prevention of injuries in top soccer players

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Soccer is one of the most popular and most performed sport in our country. This study was performed on the best players in our country that constitute the Turkish National Soccer Team and the National U-21 Teams that contribute players for national matches and training camps. We decided to study the incidence, type, distribution, mechanism and prevention of soccer injuries with a precise definition of injury in addition to close personal surveillance of players to obtain optimal data collection and to evaluate a prophylactic programme. During a one year period we witnessed 0.1 injuries per 1000 activity hours. An injury was defined as any injury occurring during scheduled games or practices and causing a player to miss the next game or practice session and the were classified into three categories. 60 injuries occurred in the 101 players that were followed during the year. 68.3 % were minor. 28.3 were moderate and 3.3 % major. Injuries were localised to the lower extremities in 91.6 % of the cases. Over-use injuries and sprains were the most common type of injury, and affected ankles previously sprained or that showed clinical instability.

The low incidence of injuries in comparison with other published reports reflects the effect of a prominent sportsmen of a national team and the effectiveness of preventive measures. These consisted of active care of minor injuries, controlled rehabilitation and specific rules for returning to sports after an injury. The incidence of ankle sprained were lowered with the administration of ankle taping performed by the players. For over-use injuries training correction and special warming-up programmes with flexibility exercises for the lower extremity were performed. In addition to these we have strengthened the team-doctor relationship.

But the injury incidence of the top players in their own teams were still high. For this purpose a program was developed that enabled us to follow the players in their own teams. Our efforts in lowering this high rate of injury will be presented with some highlights from other published reports.