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Published Abstract

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## **The First Study of Injury Epidemiology in Cheerleading during the 2016/2017 Season in the United Kingdom.**

Richard Partner\*, Danielle Roach, Peter Francis

Musculoskeletal Health Research Group, Leeds Beckett University

\*Corresponding author: r.partner@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

In 2016, competitive cheerleading was granted provisional recognition as an Olympic sport thus allowing it to be considered for future games inclusion. Team England including the 'all girl elite' and 'co-ed elite' won gold and silver respectively at the ICU World Cheerleading Championships. The aim of this study was to report the prevalence and incidence of injury in cheerleaders during the 2016/2017 UK season. Following ethical approval from the Leeds Beckett University research ethics committee, 182 competitive ( $3.7 \pm 1.8$  years' experience) cheerleaders (173 female, mean ( $\pm$ SD): age  $21 \pm 4$  y, height  $165 \pm 7$  cm, weight  $64.7 \pm 13.9$  kg) provided electronic informed consent. Players completed a retrospective injury history questionnaire adapted from a football consensus statement on injury reporting (Fuller et al., 2006, *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports*, 16(2), 83-92). Severity of injury was categorised using a time loss definition: slight (1-3 days), minor (4-7 days), moderate (1-4 weeks) and major (4 weeks plus). On average, cheerleaders engaged in ~5 hours training per week and ~3.4 competitions during the season. The one season prevalence of injury in this sample was 73%. A total of 226 injuries were reported. First time injuries (69%) were more common than recurrent injuries (31%). The maximum number of injuries reported by a single cheerleader was 5. The overall (competition and training) incidence of injury was 4.9/1000h. The majority (86%) of injuries occurred during training (4.76/1000h). Injuries to the ankle (11.9%), face (11.5%) and low back (10.2%) were the most common. Ligaments were the most commonly injured tissues (22.9% of all injuries). The most commonly reported mechanism of injury was during a stunting manoeuvre (54.9% of all injuries). Minor injuries were most common (61%), followed by moderate (21%) and major injuries (18%). This is the first study to report the prevalence and incidence of injury in cheerleading. Unlike many sports, the majority of injuries occur during training rather than competition. We suggest that this is mainly down to differences in exposure. On average, competitions last for 2.5 minutes. It may also be that cheerleaders are more aggressive in their training practices in order to perfect routines for competition, which may indicate fewer mistakes leading to injury occur on the day of competition. Prospective studies are required to develop this area of research.