

Comprehensive management of osteitis pubis in high performance sports

Manejo integral de la osteítis del pubis en el deporte de alto rendimiento

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ABSTRACT

Osteitis pubis was described as a painful inflammation of the pubic symphysis, common in athletes who performed repetitive movements such as kicking, turning and changing direction. Symptoms included pain in the front of the pelvis, radiating to the groin and difficulty with activities such as running or climbing stairs. Its diagnosis was based on clinical evaluations and imaging studies, such as X-rays and magnetic resonance imaging. Treatment required a multidisciplinary approach combining relative rest, physiotherapy, physical therapies, anti-inflammatory medication and, in severe cases, surgery. In Argentina, this condition significantly affected athletes, especially in disciplines such as soccer, rugby and hockey, so prevention and rehabilitation programs were implemented in sports centers.

Keywords: Osteitis Pubis; Inflammation; Athletes; Physiotherapy; Diagnosis.

RESUMEN

La osteítis del pubis fue descrita como una inflamación dolorosa de la sínfisis púbica, común en atletas que realizaron movimientos repetitivos como pateos, giros y cambios de dirección. Los síntomas incluyeron dolor en la parte frontal de la pelvis, irradiación hacia la ingle y dificultad para actividades como correr o subir escaleras. Su diagnóstico se basó en evaluaciones clínicas y estudios de imagen, como radiografías y resonancias magnéticas. El tratamiento requirió un enfoque multidisciplinario que combinó reposo relativo, fisioterapia, terapias físicas, medicación antiinflamatoria y, en casos graves, cirugía. En Argentina, esta afección afectó significativamente a deportistas, especialmente en disciplinas como el fútbol, el rugby y el hockey, por lo que se implementaron programas de prevención y rehabilitación en centros deportivos.

Palabras clave: Osteítis Del Pubis; Inflamación; Atletas; Fisioterapia; Diagnóstico.

BACKGROUND

Pubic osteitis is a painful inflammation of the pubic symphysis, the joint that connects the two sides of the pelvis at the front. This condition is common in athletes who participate in sports that require repetitive kicking, twisting, and changing direction, such as soccer, rugby, and track and field.^(1,2,3)

The most common symptoms include pain in the front of the pelvis, which may radiate to the groin, lower abdomen, or thighs.^(4,5) This pain often intensifies when walking, running, changing direction, or performing movements that involve the hip. Other signs may include limping, leg weakness, and difficulty climbing stairs.⁽⁵⁾

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Diagnosis is based on a combination of clinical evaluation and imaging studies. During the physical exam, the doctor may manipulate the hip to identify pain and evaluate the patient's gait. X-rays may reveal irregularities in the joint, while MRI is functional for detecting inflammation in the surrounding tissues.^(6,7)

Managing osteitis pubis in elite athletes, especially during periods of high competition such as the Olympic Games, requires a multidisciplinary and personalized approach. Treatment strategies include:

- **Relative Rest:** Reducing or modifying activities that exacerbate pain is essential to allow recovery. However, in the context of important competitions, balancing rest with the need to maintain physical condition is crucial.
- **Physical Therapy:** Implement rehabilitation programs focused on improving flexibility, strengthening the abdominal and adductor muscles, and stabilizing the core. These programs help correct muscle imbalances and prevent future injuries.
- **Cold and Heat Therapies:** Applying ice can reduce inflammation in the early stages, while heat can relieve pain later.
- **Anti-inflammatory medication:** NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) may be beneficial for controlling pain and inflammation, always under medical supervision due to possible side effects.
- **Complementary therapies:** Techniques such as manual therapy, kinesiotaping, and acupuncture may offer additional relief and improve function.
- **Surgical Interventions:** In cases refractory to conservative treatment, surgical options may be considered. However, these decisions should be made with caution, especially for high-performance athletes.

During major events such as the Olympic Games, it is essential to:⁽⁸⁾

- **Continuous Monitoring:** Regular assessments to detect early signs of exacerbation and adjust treatment as necessary.
- **Interdisciplinary Communication:** Coordination between physicians, physical therapists, coaches, and the athlete to ensure a cohesive approach tailored to competitive demands.
- **Individualized Planning:** Develop strategies allowing athletes to compete at the highest level without compromising their long-term health.

In summary, managing osteitis pubis in high-performance athletes requires balancing effective treatment and athletic demands, always prioritizing the athlete's health and well-being.⁽⁹⁾

In Argentina, osteitis pubis has affected numerous athletes, especially those in sports such as soccer, hockey, and rugby. The injury can significantly impact an athlete's career, causing prolonged absences and, in some cases, premature retirement.

Sports and medical organizations in the country have recognized the importance of proactively addressing this condition. Prevention and rehabilitation programs have been implemented in clubs and training centers to reduce the incidence and impact of osteitis pubis.

Pubic osteitis is a complex injury that requires a multidisciplinary approach to prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. In Argentine sports, coaches, doctors, and athletes must work together to minimize risk and ensure the health and well-being of athletes.

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