EARLY RETURN TO SPORT AFTER ACL RECONSTRUCTION IS NOT ASSOCIATED WITH CONTRALATERAL OR IPSILATERAL ACL INJURY

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Purpose: For many athletes who undergo ACL reconstruction, a successful return to sport following surgery is their primary goal. While some studies have reported high failure rates when patients resume athletics soon after surgery, there is no clear consensus on the optimal amount of recovery time that is needed to prevent re-injury. Some professional athletes return to sport an average of 8 months following ACL reconstruction, while other studies show that athletes return to their previous competitive level of sport at an average of 12 months postoperatively. This study reports on patients who underwent ACL reconstruction, documenting their time of return to sport, as well as the rate at which subsequent ACL or other injury was sustained to either knee. We hypothesize that athletes who return to sport at less than 12 months following ACL reconstruction do not have an increased risk of retear in the ipsilateral knee or tear in the contralateral knee.

Methods: 100 consecutive ACL reconstructions performed by a single surgeon were evaluated via retrospective chart review and follow up phone calls (interviews) to inquire about re-injury following surgery, and time to return to full sports participation. 100 consecutive patients with at least 1 year of follow up will be included. All patients underwent a single bundle ACL reconstruction using a consistent technique and performed by the senior author.

Results: 83 patients of the 100 consecutive surgeries were eligible for the study and available for follow-up. Seven patients suffered injuries which caused loss of time in sport. Two of the injuries were contralateral ACL tears. No ipsilateral retears were observed within one year of return to sport. Average time for return to full sport was 4.8 months postoperatively.

Conclusion: Early return to sport after ACL reconstruction does not predispose to recurrent ACL tear. While ipsilateral ACL tear does occur, it is uncommon.