

Press Release

Anterior Cruciate Ligament Injuries - Sports Players Return to Sport After Just Two Months Following Surgery - Fact or Fiction?

Anterior Cruciate Ligament injuries, in football in particular, continue to make the headlines. John Kennedy, Celtic and Scotland's talented young defender, among others, is predicted to be out of the game for at least a year. Now, Professor Graham Smith¹, Chairman of The Society of Sports Therapists² and one of the country's leading sport injury specialists has discovered that athletes in the USA are returning to sport after just two months following ACL injuries.

In a recent interview he said:

In March of this year I was lucky enough to spend a few days with Dr Donald Shelbourne³ in Indianapolis, USA. The time was far too short, the experience was mind blowing.

World Authority

Dr Donald Shelbourne is recognised as one of the world's leading experts in the field of Anterior Ligament (ACL) reconstruction. His recognition comes from him being one of the most widely published orthopaedic specialists in this area and by only doing ACL reconstruction rather than other general orthopaedics.

Documented data over 20 years

He performs over 280-300 reconstructions per year and follows up on all of his patients. He has done so over the past 15 -20 years. By doing so he has the data and records to support the principles and philosophies that he utilises. He also has documented evidence to collaborate the success of the methodology he employs.

Return to Sport After Just 2 Months Following Surgery

I spent time attending one of his clinics where I was able to see patients returning for their review following surgery. Some of the patients were just 2 weeks post surgery and some 6 months. Hearing how sports people were getting back to competitive sport 2 months following ACL reconstruction, without problems, was something that I had heard of previously but until then had not imagined to be possible.

The Society of Sports Therapists

Key Features

The 2 key features, which struck me, were:

(1) His operative techniques.

These are extremely important and when performing up to 300 operations a year it is inevitable that he has become a master at his trade.

(2) The Focus of the team

Everybody in the medical team and the patient (plus relatives or friends) is completely focused on what they have to do. The priority is for getting everything absolutely right in the first week following the operation.

The Operation

The procedure may surprise some as it consists of a bone patella tendon graft usually taken from the good knee. The patient then works really hard on a rehab programme on the good knee to regenerate re-growth of the donor site.

While some may be nervous of this approach there are no long-term effects. After 2 months tissue is regenerated on the good knee and the tendon normally becomes even stronger.

Early Range of Motion

The priority both during the operation and immediately afterwards is to control and minimise swelling on the ACL reconstructed knee. Working on early range of motion is critical. This again may come as a surprise to many but a particular procedure day would see surgery taking place at 8am and physiotherapy taking place at 3pm the same day.

Operation Open to Everyone

Many may now want to know if this operation could be done in the UK. My feeling is yes but it would take possibly up to 10 years to get to where Dr Shelbourne is now. The operation is also not just for elite athletes although he has operated on many high profile American sports players. His patients come from a wide range of backgrounds, occupations and abilities.

The Way Forward

Whatever your thoughts or preconceived ideas he has the data and research evidence to support this approach and it really does work. His work is totally evidence based, it is not anecdotal.

UK Visit

Dr Shelbourne will be lecturing at a UK One Day Knee Symposium, which is already attracting over 250 delegates from all aspects of sports medicine and orthopaedic care including representatives from elite and professional sport as well as the NHS.

The Society of Sports Therapists

The Symposium entitled 'From Pain To Performance' is on Saturday May 15th 2004 at the London Heathrow Marriott Hotel. It will provide a rare opportunity to listen to and question him on his concepts and philosophies.

END

Notes To Editor:

1. Professor Graham N Smith (Glasgow, UK)
Professor Graham N Smith is a Rehabilitation and Sports Injury Consultant, a Fellow of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy and Chairman of The Society of Sports Therapists. the Professional Body for Sports Therapists within the UK. He has an extensive background in the treatment, management and rehabilitation of injuries at all levels of the sporting spectrum. He was conferred a visiting Professorship at the University of Hertfordshire in 2001 and he lectures extensively nationally and internationally on rehabilitation and sports injury management.
2. The Society of Sports Therapists is the Professional Body for Sports Therapists within the UK.
The Society of Sports Therapists www.society-of-sports-therapists.org
3. Dr Donald Shelbourne is internationally recognised as one of the worlds leading experts in Anterior Cruciate Ligament surgery and rehabilitation. Widely published and clinically respected this symposium will give delegates in the United Kingdom a rare opportunity to listen and question Dr Shelbourne on his concepts and philosophies. Dr Donald Shelbourne (Indianapolis, USA) www.aclmd.com

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