

RULAND – RRD 2025

TITLE: Patient-reported outcomes, patient satisfaction, and return to play after surgical treatment of syndesmosis injuries in competitive athletes

ABSTRACT

Introduction

There has been increasing interest in surgical management of unstable syndesmotric injuries in athletes. Few studies have investigated return to play after surgical stabilization of syndesmotric injuries without fracture with minimal data on patient-reported outcome measures. The purpose of this study was to evaluate patient-reported outcomes, patient satisfaction, and return to play after surgical repair of syndesmosis injuries without fracture in competitive athletes

Methods

A retrospective review of competitive athletes (high school, collegiate, or professional level) who underwent surgical treatment of an unstable syndesmosis was performed. Patients were excluded if they were not competitive athletes or had presence of concomitant fracture. Patient-reported outcome measures were collected via telephone questionnaires. These included the Foot and Ankle Ability Measure Sports Subscale as well as seven other questions regarding subjective assessment of function, patient satisfaction, and return to play data.

Results

29 ankles in 28 competitive athletes were included in analysis. 24/28 (86%) patients were male, 4/28 (14%) were female. Average age at time of surgery was 20.7 \pm 2.4 (15-24). 25/28 (89.3%) of athletes completed the post-operative telephone questionnaire with a mean follow-up of 41 months \pm 22 (minimum follow-up 9 months). 100% of patients returned to athletic activity. 20/21 patients (95.2%) eligible to do so returned to competition, with 16/25 (64%) reporting they returned to their pre-injury level of function. Average FAAM sports score was 29.6 \pm 3.5. 24/25 patients reported post-operative function as normal (16 = 64%) or nearly normal (8 = 32%). 24/25 patients reported they were either very satisfied (16 = 64%) or satisfied (8 = 32%) with their outcome. Patient-reported time of return to unrestricted play was 19.9 \pm 9.8 weeks. Concomitant deltoid ligament repair, lateral ligament reconstruction, or chondral injury were not associated with prolonged return to play or decreased FAAM sports scores.

Conclusion

A high percentage of competitive athletes undergoing surgical treatment of syndesmosis injury were able to return to their previous level of competition, with nearly all achieving good to excellent outcome scores and satisfaction. Severity of injury, concomitant injury, or repair technique was not found to have an effect on outcomes.