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Orthopaedic Sports Injuries Revisit

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Ankle Sprain is Common but Not Always Simple

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Ankle sprain is a general term to describe injury around the ankle ligaments, most commonly on lateral side of the ankle resulted in lateral ligaments injury or tear. It usually results from inversion injury in which the lateral ligaments are injured.

It is the most common injury in young athletes. Epidemiological studies from the US had estimated incidence rate of ankle sprain in general population to be between 5 to 7 sprains per 1,000 person-years. Local data from Accident and Emergency Department, Tuen Mun Hospital had shown that there were about 1,500 consultations in 2017. The incidence was about 2 to 3 sprains per 1,000 person-years.

There are several possible risks factors, athlete, basketball or football players are prone to injury especially after jump when they landed on other's feet resulted in inversion injury. Others might have underlying predisposing factors such as varus hindfoot in which they are also prone to repeated ankle sprain. Gender, height, weight and BMI also had no conclusive evidence on increasing incidence of ankle sprain. Research team from South Korea found that wearing high heel shoes can put your ankle at risk. Journal of Foot and Ankle Surgery also reported that increasing incidence in high-heel related injury, 7,000 in 2002, 14,000 in 2012.

Ankle sprain carries a major impact on the healthcare cost and in the US, two billion dollars was spent on treatment of sprain. In addition to financial cost, these injuries are also associated with significant time lost to injury, delayed return to duty and long-term disability in up to 60% of patients. Research had been shown that chronic ankle instability in around 15-20 % of patients even if they were properly treated. Surgical intervention might be needed in those patients.

In fact, not every ankle sprain is simple and the same. There are other conditions look alike but requires different treatment modalities. Those conditions will be highlighted, and principles of management will be discussed briefly.