EMERGENCY ISSUES: THE PLACE OF FIRST AID IN FOOTBALL MATCHES

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Abstract

The study assessed the place of first aid during emergency situation in football matches. First aid provides immediate assistance to the victim of an accident before medical attention is given. It is obvious that medical attention cannot be given immediately after an incident that call for attention of medical experts, during or immediately after the match. Football players and stakeholders are very prone to various degree of injuries such as, bruise, wound, sprain, strain, dislocation, fracture, unconsciousness that require first aid assistance, before, during and after the match, therefore, there is need to equip all stakeholders in the game of football the skills required to be an effective first aider. Thus the paper examined the concepts of first aid, characteristics of a first aider during emergency situation in football matches, football injuries and emergencies, common injuries that required first aid during football match and first aid box contents for football match. Therefore, there is need for application of first aid skills in all football activities to enhance practice, protect life and implement safety practices on the field. Also, it is imperative for Football Association and team's management to design programme that would train all stakeholders such as referees, coaches, players and supporters on first aid knowledge that would make them to offer assistance during time of emergency.

Keywords: Emergency, place, first aid, football and matches

Introduction

Football is one of the most famous, contact and highly competitive sports universally. To this end, players and stakeholders are predispose to various degree of injuries such as, bruise, wound, sprain, strain, dislocation, fracture, unconsciousness that require first aid assistance, before, during and after the match. Football is among numerous sports with a high rate of injury, mostly in underage football, Werner, Andreas, Stephan, Stephan, Michael and Peter (2014). Injuries to football players may have serious long-term effects due to high risk of physical contact therefore; there is need for first aid, in order to prevent unwanted conditions for the players and all stakeholders in the game of football before, during and after the match.

First aid is emergency treatment given to the victim of an accident temporarily before medical attention. First aid is the immediate assistance provided to a sick or injured person until professional help arrives. It is concerned not only with physical injury or illness but also with other initial care, including psychosocial support for people suffering from emotional distress caused by experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event. First aid intends to "preserve life, reduce suffering, prevent further illness or injury and promote quick recovery". American Red Cross Scientific Advisory Council (2016). First aid training has the potential to reduce morbidity and mortality from common injuries and illnesses, which represent a significant public health burden. A first aider is someone that takes action while taking care to keep victim involved safe (Gina,

2014). It is expected of first aider to ensure that an area is safe before given attention to a casualty (Gina, 2014) and to cause no further harm while embarking on it. First aid knowledge and kit should not be limited to only medical personnel but rather extend to players, coaches referees and other stakeholders in football. And it should be noted that every emergency situation required mostly first aid assistance.

Characteristics of a First Aider during Emergency Situation before and during Football Matches

1. **Observant**: He or she should be vigilant to notice the degree of the injury.
2. **Resourceful**: He or she should be able to use the best advantage of whatever is at hand to prevent further damage.
3. **Tactful**: He or she should, without the less questions, learn the symptoms and history of the case, and secure the confidence of the causality, and the bystanders in the treatment of the causality.
4. **Dexterous**: He or she should handle causality without causing unnecessary pain and use techniques efficiently, quickly and neatly.
5. **Explicit:** He or she should give clear instructions to the causality and for the by standers how best to assist the victim.
6. **Persevering:** He or she should continue his efforts, though not at first successful, until relieved by a superior medical authority or death of the causality is undoubted.
7. **Discriminating:** He or she should decide which of several causalities and injuries should be treated first and where modification of the correct treatment as the result of commonsense, may be necessary.
8. **Sympathetic:** He or she should give real comfort and encouragement to the suffering, always remembering the first principles of humanity.

Football Injuries and Emergencies

Football injuries are considered to be any physical injury that happens to a player during football training or during a match. A physical injury does not depend on if it needs medical attention or not, nor if the player will be absent from the training or practice (Fuller et al. 2006).

In the case of any form of injuries, the referee is the right person and the closest person to give assistance in those situations where first aid is quickly needed. This also means that in those cases, referees will be in charge of that injured football player until an arrival of medical team on the field. Referees are in control and can delegate others in other duties, for example to call the medical team, or to prevent people approaching too close to the injured player. All these things are important for a referee to know, to react when something serious happens, knowing what to do, and also knowing what to expect from the situation that is happening. The first aid knowledge would assist the referee to even save the lives of football players.

In general, serious injuries don't happen often, but if they happen it will be very efficient to be prepared to act. Researchers have shown that most injuries in football happen in the lower extremities. Mostly they happen by physical contact, by running, by ball kicking, jumping, etc. For example, a twisted ankle, ball impacts onto a player, nose bleedings or wounds are not considered serious injuries in football. These examples are ones that also need first aid, but they are not as serious as the player will probably be able to continue the game afterward. In cases of injuries where the referee will need to assist in giving first aid to a player, he or she will need, as in all injuries, the game to be stopped. The difference however with serious injuries compared to non-serious injuries is that the referee is in charge of the injured football player until the arrival of a medical team. The game will not continue until the medical team takes control of the situation

and move the injured player off the field, (Kramer and Dvorak, 2015). The referee is the one in charge of the situation. Since the referee is the person closed to the injured player, he or she would be the right person to take responsibilities and give the care needed to that injured football player while waiting for the medical team.

There was an instance of a referee that used first aid experience to save a life during emergency situation in one of the National Women League Match in Nigeria, according to the Nigeria (Football) Referee Association (2018), there was a member of the Lagos State Football Referees Council, Ruth Okafor that used Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) to resuscitate a female player that was unconscious during a National Women League Match at Ilorin, Kwara State, during 2017/2018 football session. To this end, the referee needs first aid knowledge to be up to the task that may arise on the field.

In addition to the (CPR) used by Ruth Okafor to save a life, Referee can as well use an **ABCDE Technique** for the assessment of all injuries on the field of play. According to (Hodgson and Kramer, 2000), the ABCDE technique is always be ahead by checking firstly for your safety to attend to the player, i.e. dangers, and secondly for the player's response (DR ABCDE).

Danger

On approach look for any dangers to yourself and the player.

Approach, if it is safe to do so.

Remember, if you are incapacitated you will be of no help to anybody.

If it is unsafe, wait for the medical team personnel to sort out the matter.

Response

Speak to the player in a clear, loud voice. If he does not respond apply painful stimuli by squeezing his earlobe between your thumb and finger and if he still does not respond assess the airway to see if it is clear.

Always consider a neck injury and do not "shake" an unresponsive player to assess their response.

Airway

Look inside the player's mouth to assess if anything is blocking the airway. Examples of items that may block a player's airway on the field of play:

- blood in the mouth
- broken and loose teeth
- mud (especially if the ground is wet and the player falls face down)

Breathing

Look, listen and feel for breathing for a maximum of ten seconds. This should all be done at the same time, by looking to see if the player's chest is rising and falling as they breathe in and out. Listen by placing your ear close to the player's mouth and nose to listen for sounds of breathing. Feeling for breathing can be done in two ways, first by placing your hand on the player's chest to feel if it rises and falls as they breathe, or second by placing your cheek close to the player's mouth to feel the air being expelled onto your cheek as they breath out.

If the player appears not to be breathing (that is, you cannot see, feel or hear breathing) or not breathing normally, begin (CPR).

Circulation

Look for and stop any life-threatening bleeding.

Disability

If the player is breathing normally and has signs of life, i.e. their chest is rising and falling and their airway is open but they remain unresponsive, you can reassess and monitor the player's level of response for signs of improvement (disability level). This is achieved by noting whether: the player is fully alert and responsive to you the player is

not alert but is responsive to your voice the player is not alert but does respond to your touch or a painful stimulus e.g. earlobe squeeze the player is unresponsive – does not respond to any of the above.

Expose / Examine

You cannot treat what you cannot see. You must be able to see the injury to be able to effectively treat it. Injuries may be hidden under the players' clothing. Expose the relevant injury by removing as much clothing as it is necessary to look for underlying injuries.

Sequel to the above approach for the assessment of all injuries, every referee should be well equipped in respect of the Basic Life Support (BLS) for the emergency on the field of play to save and preserve the life of players when the need arises.

Therefore, stakeholders in football needs first aid knowledge in order to be up to the task that may arise on the field.

Common Injuries that Required First Aid during Football Match

The football match injuries have been classified into three major categories as follows;

Bone Injuries: Lower and Upper extremities and Chest

Fracture
Dislocation
Chest injuries

Injuries to the Head and Neck:

Spinal Injuries
Head Injuries
Concussion
Jaw and Face injuries
Eye Injuries
Nasal Injuries
Dental Injuries

Wounds and Bleeding:

Abrasion Wound
Contusion wound
Laceration wound
Incision wound
Puncture wound
External bleeding
Internal bleeding

First Aid Box Contents for Football Match

Below is a recommended list that deals with the majority of injuries before, during and after the match. The football clubs should be responsible for providing this first aid equipment. However, it is the responsibility of a First Aider to check the contents of the first aid box before each match or training session so that you are sure that all the items of first aid equipment are in date, sterile and present.

Minimum contents:

1. Protective gloves, (two pairs minimum)
2. Pocket Mask for rescue breathing
3. Plasters (various sizes, waterproof)
4. Sterile trauma type clean dressings (variety of sizes)
5. Tape
6. Gauze swabs
7. Access to ice on the day or ice packs
8. Crepe bandages
9. Triangular bandages (6 minimum)
10. Foil space blankets or preferably ambulance type blankets to keep players warm when injured
11. Rescue type scissors
12. Paper and pencil / pen
13. Packet or sachet of sugar
14. Tweezers

First aider also needs to have access to these items for emergency situations during a football match:

An Automated External Defibrillator (AED)

An area to treat players away from direct sunlight

A stretcher or trolley; If you do not have access to these, keep the player still and warm on the field of play until the arrival of medical teams.

Access to hot and cold running water or sterile water at the side of the field of play or close by

First aid manual Player injury record forms (kept inside lockable cupboard).

Accessibility to right equipment is imperative to adequate emergency care for injuries.

The rightly prepared first aid box cannot substitute the knowledge and experience of physician in handling emergencies during football match. According to Werner, Andreas, Stephan, Stephan, Michael and Peter (2014) football coach is the only responsible official for first aid management in under age football. The assessment of injuries is a very essential scope of treatment, but is extremely difficult for non-physician and should be included in training of football for stakeholders such as coaches, players, referees and fans in the future, Sneed, May and Stencel, (2004).

Conclusion

With the large number of participants universally playing the game of football, it is expected that an equal large number of injuries would occur simultaneously every year. This now call for the knowledge of first aid and its provision. First aid is emergency treatment that required certain characteristics of who is first aider. First aid tends to preserve life, alleviate suffering, prevent further injury, and promote recovery. However, first aider is expected to possess certain qualities or characteristics that would make him or her to do the needful and respond to emergency situation before the arrival of medical team before and during the football match.

Recommendations

That there is need for application of first aid skills to all football activities to enhance practice, protect life and implement safety practices on the field during emergency situation.

That it is imperative for Football Association and teams management to design programme that would train all stakeholders such as referees, coaches, players and supporters on first aid knowledge that would make them to offer assistance during time of emergency.

That those that have acquired the skills and knowledge of first aids before needs to be abreast of updates in handling emergency situation before, during and after the football match.

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