

1 **Title:** Do anterior cruciate ligament injury risk reduction exercises reflect common injury
2 mechanisms? A scoping review of the exercises contained within ACL injury prevention
3 programs

4

5 **ABSTRACT**

6 **Context:** ACL injury risk reduction programs have become increasingly popular. As ACL
7 injuries continue to reflect high incidence rates, the continued optimization of current risk
8 reduction programs, and the exercises contained within them, is warranted. The exercises must
9 evolve to align with new etiology data, but there is concern that the exercises do not fully reflect
10 the complexity of ACL injury mechanisms and inciting events.

11 **Objective:** To examine if exercises designed to reduce the risk of ACL injury reflect key injury
12 mechanisms: multiplanar movement; single limb stance; trunk and hip dissociative control; and a
13 flight phase.

14 **Data Sources:** A systematic search was performed in PubMed, Medline, EBSCO (CINAHL),
15 SPORTSDiscus, PEDRO databases.

16 **Study Selection:** Eligibility Criteria: 1) RCTs or prospective cohort studies, 2) male and/or
17 female participants of any age; 3) exercises were targeted interventions to prevent ACL/knee
18 injuries; 4) individual exercises were listed and adequately detailed and excluded if program was
19 unable to be replicated clinically.

20 **Study Design:** Scoping review

21 **Level of Evidence:** 4

22 **Data Extraction:** 35 studies were included, and 1019 exercises were extracted for analysis.

23 **Results:** The average Consensus on Exercise Reporting Template (CERT) score was 11 (range
24 0-14). The majority of exercises involved bilateral weight bearing (n=418/1019; 41.0%),
25 followed by single limb (n=345/1019; 33.9%) and non-weight bearing (n=256/1019; 25.1%).
26 Only 20% of exercises incorporated more than 1 plane of movement, and the majority of
27 exercises had sagittal plane dominance. Although 50% of exercises incorporated a flight phase,
28 only half of these also involved single leg weight bearing. Just 16% of exercises incorporated
29 trunk and hip dissociation, and these were rarely combined with other key exercise elements.
30 Only 13% of exercises challenged more than 2 key elements, and only 1% incorporated all 4
31 elements (multiplanar single limb; trunk and hip dissociation; flight) simultaneously.

32 **Conclusions:** Many risk reduction exercises do not reflect the task specific elements identified
33 within ACL injury mechanisms. Addressing the underrepresentation of key elements (e.g. trunk
34 hip dissociation, multiplanar movements) may optimize risk reduction in future trials.

35 **Key Terms:** Exercise; hip; knee; injury prevention; neuromuscular training

36

37 **What we know:**

- 38
- Exercise interventions can reduce ACL injury incidence, but there is no strong evidence
39 outlining which specific exercises are optimal and in what combination.
 - Most ACL injuries involve at least one of the following key events: multiplanar
40 movement; single limb stance; altered trunk and hip dissociative control; and flight phase
41 (phase when both feet are off the ground at the same time).
 - Greater risk reduction may potentially be achieved if exercise interventions align with
42 etiology data.
- 43
- 44

45

46 **What this study adds:**

- 47 • Many of the exercises used within injury prevention programs do not reflect the task
48 specific elements identified within ACL injury mechanisms.
- 49 • Most exercises (67%) are undertaken in either non-weightbearing or bilateral stance.
- 50 • Exercises rarely incorporate multiplanar movements (20%) or trunk and hip dissociation
51 (16%).
- 52 • Exercises that represent elements found within the injury mechanism are
53 underrepresented with just 1 in 8 challenging >2 key elements simultaneously.
- 54

55 **INTRODUCTION**

56 Anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injuries can be devastating to athletes. In the United states,
57 120,000 – 200,000 ACL injuries occur every year,³⁷ with surgical and related costs upwards of
58 \$1-3 billion. ^{36,54,64} ACL injury can have both significant short-term (time away from sport) and
59 long-term implications.

60 They carry a high risk of re-injury,⁵⁸ with up to 50% of patients failing to return to their pre-
61 injury level of athletic participation.^{2,3,34,49} ACL injury is also associated with a significant
62 increased risk for post-traumatic knee osteoarthritis, which may present as early as 2 years
63 following initial ACL reconstruction.⁵⁸ In an effort to mitigate the effects of ACL injuries, for
64 both society at large and for the female athlete particularly, ACL injury prevention programs
65 have become increasingly popular. It is important to note, even though there have been
66 tremendous resources placed into the research and development of ACL injury prevention
67 programs, ACL injuries continue at a high rate.^{1,25,37,54,56,71,75} As ACL injuries continue to reflect

68 high incidence rates, the continued optimization of current injury prevention programs is
69 warranted.⁶⁶

70
71 In a meta-analysis of meta-analyses, Webster and Hewett⁷¹ found conclusive evidence that injury
72 prevention programs reduce the risk of ACL injury by half in the female athlete. However, the
73 risk reduction varies considerably across individual studies and it has been reported that there is
74 insufficient data to make conclusions on the effectiveness of injury prevention programs in male
75 athletes.⁷¹ This inconsistency may be driven by several factors, but variations in injury
76 prevention programs content seem to be important; with published research comprising wide
77 combinations of strength, balance, flexibility and jump training elements. Reviews that have
78 tried to identify which training elements are most associated with prophylactic effectiveness,
79 have found greatest effectiveness in programs, specifically from controlled studies, emphasizing
80 strengthening and proximal control training,⁶³ and some have failed to find strong evidence for
81 an optimal and specific exercise combination.^{20,34,54}

82
83 Understanding the global three-dimensional position of the athlete's body and the mechanisms
84 which lead to ACL injuries is crucial to effectively design specific preventative exercises.^{14,21}
85 Video analysis studies¹⁴ provide insight into the situational patterns most associated with ACL
86 injury in sport. An analysis of 107 ACL injuries in men's soccer emphasizes the large proportion
87 associated with: mechanical perturbation to the upper body; single leg landings; and high
88 horizontal speeds.¹⁴ Studies have also found that multi-directional, reactive phases of play (e.g.
89 pressing/defending/tackling) or high speed jumping and landing events⁴³ were the most common
90 inciting events.¹⁴ These patterns largely corroborate previous research from male⁷⁰ and female¹²

91 soccer; American Football³⁵ and Rugby Union.⁴⁶ There is also consistent evidence that a large
92 proportion of ACL injury events involve large base of support to center of mass distance,⁵⁷
93 excessive or aberrant movements of the trunk,³³ creating knee valgus moments,⁵⁹ particularly
94 when the lower extremity is fixed on the ground (e.g. timing related to landing from a jump).^{31,43}

95
96 There is concern that current ACL prevention exercises lack complexity.^{26,28,30,42,43,50,70} Although
97 basic exercise programs are easily replicated in clinical trials, they may not adequately challenge
98 motor learning in the athlete, and may lack context and specificity, when juxtaposed to complex
99 injury mechanisms.^{9,27,28,30} Adopting a complex approach to exercise design may invoke a non-
100 linear interaction between varying risk-factors, ultimately preparing the athlete across multiple
101 constructs simultaneously.²⁹

102
103 Although it is injury risk reduction that is the overarching goal of these programs,⁷¹ the name
104 “injury prevention programs” will be used to reflect the term most often utilized in the literature
105 that was scoped. Our primary objective was to quantify the extent to which injury prevention
106 programs incorporate tasks which reflect common ACL injury mechanisms based on the
107 presence or absence of: multiplanar movements; single limb stance; trunk and hip dissociative
108 control; and a flight phase (phase of gait when both feet are off the ground at the same time).

109 110 **METHODS**

111 A systematic literature search was conducted after consulting the Preferred Reporting Items for
112 Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR)
113 statement and the checklist completed.⁶⁹ The final protocol was registered with the Open Science

114 Framework on 8 April 2020 (<https://osf.io/wvqxp>). A scoping review design and methodology
115 was used due to the exploratory nature of the research question. Scoping reviews aim to report
116 concepts and theories related to knowledge gaps on a specific topic and key factors related to a
117 concept.^{47,69} Due to the nature of scoping reviews, the risk of bias assessment is not applicable
118 and does not influence scoping review outcomes.⁶⁹ However, a measure of the quality of the
119 reported injury prevention programs was relevant to this review. The assessment tool utilized
120 was the Consensus on Exercise Reporting Template (CERT).^{60,61} A score for each included paper
121 on the quality of reporting the listed exercise program was recorded.

122

123 **Search Strategy**

124 A systematic literature search of the PubMed, EBSCOhost (CINAHL), Medline, Physiotherapy
125 Evidence Database (PEDro) and SPORTDiscus databases was performed from inception to 8
126 April 2020, to obtain relevant studies for the review. Language was limited to English and study
127 participants were all human. Electronic databases were searched using a combination of
128 generalized keywords related to ACL injury prevention programs in an effort to obtain a broad
129 search of injury prevention programs (anterior cruciate ligament* or knee injur* and prevent*
130 The search results are presented in the PRISMA-ScR flow diagram [Fig. 1]. A manual search of
131 the reference lists from articles gathered during the primary search, as well as from related
132 systematic reviews was also performed.

133

134 **Eligibility Criteria**

135 The inclusion criteria was as follows: 1) randomized controlled trials, prospective cohort studies,
136 2) the authors clearly stated that the exercises in the reported program were targeted

137 interventions to prevent ACL/knee injuries or explicitly part of an ACL injury prevention
138 program; 3) male and/or female participants of any age; 4) exercises contained in the ACL injury
139 prevention programs must be specifically listed and the program explicitly detailed.

140

141 **Study Selection**

142 The identification of relevant articles, titles and abstracts were downloaded into EndNote X8.2
143 (Thomson Reuters, USA), where duplicates were removed. All relevant articles, titles, and
144 abstracts were captured and independently screened by five authors (
145) applying the *a priori* inclusion criteria. If the abstract provided insufficient information to
146 determine eligibility for inclusion, full text articles were then retrieved. In the case of differing
147 assessments of the retrieved studies between the reviewing authors, the specific study was
148 collaboratively discussed amongst the assigned author and the principal investigator () and a
149 consensus was reached. All criteria were again independently applied by the authors (
150) to the full-text articles that passed the initial screening process. If a
151 consensus could not be reached on the decision for final inclusion, another senior author ()
152 was consulted. If multiple studies included the same ACL injury prevention program, only one
153 study was included that detailed all the specific exercises. The authors of any duplicated
154 programs were also acknowledged in the analysis.

155

156 **Quality Assessment**

157 Consensus on Exercise Reporting Template (CERT)

158 The lead author () randomly assigned the studies to the co-authors ()
159 who extracted the intervention data and scored each program using the CERT reporting form

160 with guidance from the Explanation and Elaboration Statement document.⁶⁰ The CERT is a 16-
161 item checklist developed and endorsed by an international panel of exercise experts designed to
162 assess the quality/comprehensiveness of reporting of exercise and contains seven categories:
163 materials, provider, delivery, location, dosage, tailoring and compliance.⁶¹ Following data
164 extraction, any differences between reviewers were discussed and a final score was reached via a
165 consensus meeting between the assessing author and the lead author (). A third reviewer
166 () was consulted when consensus could not be met initially.

167

168 **Data Extraction, Analysis, and Definitions**

169 All therapeutic exercises were extracted for data analysis from the included studies. The
170 elements of each exercise were chosen to assess commonly reported events occurring during an
171 ACL injury [Table 1]. In instances where the listed exercise was not clear, it was marked with an
172 asterisk and the senior authors collaborated to determine how the exercise should be analyzed.
173 Two senior reviewers () initially analyzed all the exercises, and exercises that needed
174 another senior reviewer, () facilitated a final decision. A priori definitions were used to
175 categorize each exercise element into the appropriate column, signifying if the element was
176 present or not. It is acknowledged by the authors that many human movements can be argued to
177 be multiplanar in nature, but it was the motive and intent of the prescribing author that was
178 attempted to be captured, allowing the definitions to be as pragmatic and as relatable to a clinical
179 context as possible. The exercise elements were defined as follows:

180

181 *1. Plane of Movement*

182 The exercise was analyzed to see how many planes of movement occurred to achieve the
183 primary purpose. The knee joint has been reported to move in all three planes,³³ so this analysis
184 sought to score if the exercises challenged the knee in multiple planes. There were three
185 subcategories including sagittal, frontal, and transverse planes. If an exercise was identified as
186 multiplanar, the multiplanar box was checked, and then the two or three planes were then also
187 identified in the analysis. This analysis focused on identifying if the exercise reflected a
188 progression to multi- or triplanar movements, which is reflective of sporting movements.⁶⁸ The
189 highest level of complexity in this category would be an exercise that captured a multiplanar
190 movement that included rotation in the transverse plane.

191

192 *a. Sagittal Plane*

193 The primary intent of the exercise utilized movement that occurred primarily within the sagittal
194 plane. Exercises such as forward and backward running, jumping or hopping, and forward lunges
195 were considered to occur primarily in the sagittal plane.

196

197 *b. Frontal Plane*

198 The primary movement of the exercise occurred within the frontal plane. An example would be a
199 sidelying straight leg raise, and more functional type exercises such as a side shuffle or lateral
200 hops and jumps. If a frontal plane movement occurred with a coupled movement into another
201 plane, the additional planes of movement were credited.

202

203 *c. Transverse Plane*

204 The primary movement of the exercise occurred within the transverse plane. Seated external
205 rotation with a band is an isolated transverse plane exercise. Exercises where the author reported
206 at least a $\frac{1}{4}$ turn or a 90 degree rotational change of direction, was included as movement on the
207 transverse plane.

208

209 2. Weight Bearing Status

210 The primary movement of the exercise was analyzed to determine how the lower extremities
211 were contacting the ground. The analysis sought to determine if the target lower extremity was in
212 a position of extension with the acetabulum oriented vertically over the femur in a long axis full
213 weight-bearing position. This position rules out exercises such as bridging or quadruped as
214 weight bearing in the context of preventing an ACL injury. The highest level of complexity in
215 this category was single limb stance. When illustrations or written details were not provided, the
216 authors conferred and agreed on how to score the exercise.

217

218 a. Unilateral Weight Bearing

219 The primary movement of the exercise had a single lower extremity contacting the ground,
220 where the hip was in a position of extension and the acetabulum positioned over the femur in an
221 long axis full weight bearing position. The subject performing the exercise must have been in an
222 upright vertical position. A single limb plank, although the hip is in extension, was not
223 considered unilateral weight bearing for this reason.

224

225 b. Bilateral Weight Bearing

226 The primary intent of the exercise occurred when both of the lower extremities were contacting
227 the ground in the acetabulum over femur orientation of closed chain movement. All variations of
228 lunges were considered to be bilateral weight bearing exercises because both feet were on the
229 ground during the intentional phase of the exercise.

230

231 *c. Non-Weight Bearing*

232 The exercise was carried out while neither lower extremity was in a functional upright
233 acetabulum over femur position with the feet on the ground. The category was analyzed to
234 determine if the weight bearing position is reflective of the specific upright tasks encountered
235 during the injury mechanism. Quadruped exercises, planks, Nordic hamstring curls and bridging
236 were not considered weight-bearing since the method and position of delivery was not reflective
237 of the upright position identified in the injury mechanism.

238

239 *3. Trunk & Hip Dissociative Control*

240 The authors of this review acknowledge that most any exercise or movement involves the trunk.
241 This analysis seeks to assess if the trunk is deliberately and purposefully being involved in
242 dissociative movements related to the pelvifemoral complex and lower extremity. The analysis
243 was focused on the identified task, and if the exercise involved the dissociation of trunk. This
244 element was scored as being present if there was a specific task of the trunk and pelvis, so
245 essentially the acetabulum, is moving in a dissociative relationship with the femur. For example,
246 how the trunk moves during single limb balance exercises on an unstable surface or during an
247 exercise where the trunk is being utilized as a lever to dissociate its movement on a stable weight
248 bearing extremity, as in a single limb dead lift, the trunk is purposefully moving in relation to a

249 stable femur. The analysis was designed to identify how the trunk was moving over the femur
250 because exercises aimed at improving trunk control may reduce ACL injury risk.^{33,62,73,74}

251
252 *4. Flight Phase*

253 The exercise must include a phase where both lower extremities are simultaneously off the
254 ground during the exercise. This would include any running, jumping, or hopping variations. The
255 purpose was to identify if the exercise included a specific element of the injury mechanism,
256 which would be a deceleratory landing phase. Injuries often occur during the landing phase,
257 following running (which can occur in 30-100ms), thus incorporating a landing element and
258 focusing on lower limb and trunk alignment may induce neuromuscular adaptations and
259 activation strategies to reduce ACL injury risk.^{20,65}

260

261 **RESULTS**

262 **Exercise Analysis**

263 N=1019 exercises were extracted from the 35 included studies [Table 1]. The number of
264 exercises employed within each study varied considerably, with a median of 24 exercises per
265 program (range 4-104). The majority of exercises involved bilateral weight bearing (n=418/1019;
266 41.0%), followed by single limb (n=345/1019; 33.9%) and non-weight bearing (n=256/1019;
267 25.1%) [Fig. 2a]. Non weightbearing exercises typically involved variations of pelvic bridges,
268 abdominal crunches and planks. Most exercises (834/1019; 81.8%) involved movements in the
269 sagittal plane, with just 27.3% and 10.6% involving the frontal or transverse planes respectively
270 [Fig. 2b].

271

272 Furthermore, only 1 in 5 exercises (19.5%) incorporated more than one plane of movement. The
273 majority of multiplanar exercises (~94%) combined movements in either the sagittal/transverse
274 (n=86/199; 43.2%) such as jumps or lunges with a 90 or 180 degree turn in position or
275 movements in the sagittal/frontal (n=101/199; 50.7%) such as a squat to a lateral hop or jump or
276 single limb balance on an unstable surface. Just 2 exercises (< 0.1%), both versions of the T-test,
277 simultaneously challenged movement in all three planes. N=518/1019 (50.8%) exercises
278 incorporated a flight phase component, of which, just under half involved a single leg landing
279 (n=251). The most under represented exercise element was trunk and hip dissociative control
280 which was present in just 16.1% of all exercises (n=164/1019). 33.7% of exercises (344/1019)
281 did not feature any of the core elements: A. multiplanar movements; B. single limb stance; C.
282 trunk and hip dissociative control; and D. flight phase.

283
284 The Venn diagram [Fig. 3] categorizes 675 exercises, with 41.6% (281/675) challenging a single
285 element, represented by sections A,B,C and D. The overlapping sections represent the various
286 combinations of exercise elements. 58.3% of exercises (394/675) involved more than one
287 element, but there is a general trend that as more elements are combined, the values in the Venn
288 decrease. 38.5% (260/675) of exercises combined 2 elements, 16.4% (111/675) combined 3
289 elements, and just 3.4% (23/675) combined all four exercise elements. The most common
290 combinations were BD (flight and single leg stance) and ABD (multi-planar, single limb stance
291 and flight). Exercises involving trunk and hip dissociation were underrepresented.

292

293 **Quality Assessment**

294 Consensus on Exercise Reporting Template (CERT):

295 The CERT reporting form results [Table 2] ranged from 0 to 14 (19 total possible points) with an
296 average score of 11.0. Most shortcomings concerned items 7a, 9, 10, 11, 14a, and 15 [Figure 4].
297 For calculation of the completeness of the exercise descriptions, a single score was calculated for
298 CERT for each study. Items 1, 3, and 14a scored the highest; exercise equipment described,
299 exercises performed individually or in a group and generic or individually tailored, each scoring
300 affirmative in 35 of the 35 studies. None of the studies completed all items in the checklist, for a
301 score of 19, the highest score for an individual CERT was 14, with three papers achieving the
302 highest score.^{19,23,25}

303

304 **DISCUSSION**

305 This scoping review analyzes exercises contained within ACL injury risk reduction programs.
306 Previous reviews in this field have categorized exercise-based training components using macro
307 elements based on the presence of absence of things such as: proximal control exercises, strength
308 training, plyometrics, balance exercises, agility training, and flexibility.^{4,34,54,56,63,67} To our
309 knowledge, this is the first review to quantify the extent to which individual exercises comprise
310 task-specific elements (multiplanar movements; single limb stance; trunk and hip dissociative
311 control; and a flight phase) closely associated with ACL injury mechanism and inciting events.
312 We analyzed an aggregate of 1019 exercises extracted from 35 studies. Overall, we found that
313 few programs exposed athletes to the task specific injury mechanism elements identified
314 specifically contained within this review. It was also noted that representation diminished as
315 multiple elements were combined into a singular exercise. Incorporating multiple elements,
316 which may increase the complexity of the exercises, has the potential to improve motor learning
317 strategies needed to control various interactions between multiple different risk factors.

318 The large majority of exercises in the ACL injury prevention program literature have sagittal
319 plane dominance (81.8%). Common examples were straight line running, squats, forward/reverse
320 lunges, and forward/backward jumping/hopping. We acknowledge that straight ahead running
321 was potentially used as a “warm-up” strategy versus an exercise for risk reduction. That said, if
322 running/sprinting was listed as a clear part of the injury prevention program it was analyzed as it
323 was reported. It could not be assumed that running exercises were only utilized as non-risk
324 reducing activities. Adopting a shallow knee flexion angle on landing or side cutting is a key risk
325 factor associated with ACL injuries¹⁴ and sagittal plane exercises may help to optimize landing
326 mechanics, allowing athletes to better absorb ground reaction forces.^{6,40,51} However, we would
327 suggest that sagittal plane movements are over represented in the current literature. ACL injuries
328 typically involve a multiplanar event, yet only 19.5% exercises challenged athletes in more than
329 one movement plane. The majority of multiplanar movements (~94%), utilized the
330 sagittal/frontal plane or sagittal/transverse plane. The fewest multiplanar exercises utilized the
331 coupling of the frontal and transverse planes. It is often reported that a primary mechanism of the
332 ACL injury is a valgus collapse about the frontal plane coupled with a rotational
333 component.^{5,14,39,41,44,45} yet this multiplanar combination was only included in 1% (N=10/1019)
334 of the exercises analyzed. These exercises were primarily running sideways with a carioca or
335 crossover type of movement or stationary exercises such as a lateral lunge with a rotational twist.
336 These exercises met the definition of a multiplanar movement, but we would suggest that they
337 are not fully representative of a high speed deceleratory landing observed during sports.¹⁴
338 Furthermore, these exercises were often in isolation and were rarely combined with the other
339 exercise elements recognized as being present during an ACL injury (flight, single leg stance or
340 trunk and hip control)¹⁸ This seems to represent a reductionist approach common to many areas

341 of musculoskeletal rehabilitation, whereby simplistic frameworks are applied to complex injury
342 pathologies.^{7,8,10,15,16,29}

343
344 It is well documented that a large proportion of ACL injuries occur in unilateral weight bearing,
345 some authors report as high as 70% of ACL injuries.^{38,46,50,70} This is not yet fully reflected in
346 current injury prevention program literature, with 25% of exercises undertaken in non-weight
347 bearing and 41% in bilateral weight bearing. Furthermore, many of these exercises focused on
348 developing strength in various muscle groups, such as the quadriceps, hamstrings, hip abductors
349 and core musculature. Although strengthening exercises remain important, we must be cognizant
350 that isolated strengthening does not fully address many of the aberrant biomechanical patterns
351 associated with injury.^{5,55,72} Replicating the specificity of a task has been reported to potentially
352 improve neuromotor planning.^{27,28} As single leg landings with a rotary component are a
353 commonly reported mechanism of a non-contact ACL injury,^{46,50,70} it was surprising that there
354 were so few exercises with these elements simultaneously represented.

355
356 Only 16.1% (164/1019) of exercises in ACL injury prevention programs incorporated trunk and
357 hip dissociative control. This was also surprising as excessive or aberrant trunk movement is
358 present in 34%-83% of ACL injuries.¹⁴ It is postulated that aberrant trunk position alters muscle
359 performance leading to, stiffer landings,³² increased knee abduction moments, dynamic valgus,
360 and ultimately excessive loading of the ACL.³¹ In the current review, most trunk and hip
361 dissociation exercises were limited to catching and throwing or single leg dead lifts. Future
362 injury prevention programs should consider hip focused progressions training to reduce the
363 mediolateral landing posture, aligning foot contact with trunk position,⁵⁹ whereby allowing

364 athletes to learn to control trunk perturbations, ipsilateral lean, and counter-trunk rotation
365 movements.^{14,17}

366
367 Optimal injury reduction methods require a task specific approach, whereby exercises are
368 progressed via specificity and optimal loading principles.¹¹ This means that injury prevention
369 programs should eventually expose athletes to non-linear and task-specific challenges that are
370 representative of the forces and loads that may occur within open-systems, such as an injury
371 event.⁵³ A multidimensional exercise approach will utilize principles of dynamic systems and
372 motor learning principles to engage the athlete in movements that complex, yet safe and
373 achievable.¹¹ The exercises should progress the athlete towards movements that will be
374 encountered during sport, while ensuring a high quality of task performance with a criteria based
375 approach.^{11,18} This review clearly identifies that the current literature lacks many important
376 exercise progressions and does not fully reflect the elements found within ACL injury
377 mechanisms and inciting events. The progression from uniplanar to multiplanar movements, and
378 from bilateral to unilateral stance were underrepresented. The collective integration of all key
379 exercise elements was rare, and we found just <1% of exercises incorporating flight, single leg
380 rotary loading, whilst simultaneously challenging the trunk, pelvis, and hip control beyond the
381 sagittal plane.^{13,19,23-25,48,51}

382
383 Lastly, when reporting and developing exercise-based interventions, the Consensus on Exercise
384 Reporting Template (CERT) is an available tool.⁶⁰ Programs designed to reduce the numbers of
385 ACL injuries have inherent limitations that have been highlighted by utilizing the CERT scoring
386 method. Programs to prevent ACL injuries are typically generically implemented to large groups,

387 lacking individualization, without progression decisions being reported. Improved reporting of
388 programs is critical to move forward in the quality and completeness of ACL injury prevention
389 programs. A key limitation of the existing injury prevention program literature, however, is that
390 few papers have published programs that are considered thoroughly reported according to the
391 CERT scoring guidelines. This contributes to the known implementation challenges of
392 intervention, individuality, adaptation, and fidelity.²² Since many of the injury prevention
393 programs reported here were published prior to the development of the CERT, there should be an
394 improvement with the reporting of exercise programs moving forward.

395

396 **Limitations**

397 The authors of this review acknowledge the multidimensional nature of an ACL injury, and the
398 complex interactions between both modifiable and non-modifiable risk factors as well as
399 considering other infinite combinations of complex variables such as feedback, dosage, sport,
400 age, and sex.^{26,52} This review only focuses on a specific portion of the exercise prescription and
401 methods which is based on core elements associated with ACL injury. The current literature is
402 based primarily on more basic, preliminary exercises, we acknowledge the challenges associated
403 with implementing task specific exercises. For example, these exercises may require increased
404 supervision to ensure appropriate performance, potentially making it less desirable for coaches
405 and clinicians to implement, consequently, affecting fidelity. It is also a consideration that
406 exercises reflective of injury mechanisms should be added as optimizing adjunctive exercises,
407 and should not be the sole focus of the program, which will avoid the program becoming so
408 targeted they fail to provide a large enough “blanket effect” to reach a wide variety of sports.

409

410

411

412 CONCLUSION

413 Current injury prevention programs have reported reductions in injury, but the exact mechanism
414 under which they reduce risk is unclear. Perhaps, optimal risk reduction in this field may require
415 exercise progressions which culminate in movements that more closely resemble the mechanism
416 of an ACL injury. This should ultimately include exercises which simultaneously integrate
417 multiplanar movements, dissociative control between the trunk and hip, during single leg
418 landings. Whilst it is pragmatic that more functionally task specific exercises would be
419 associated with greater risk reduction, high quality prospective trials are warranted, prior to
420 potential adoption and implementation.

421

422

423

Figure Legend:

424

425 Fig.1 PRISMA-ScR

426

427 Table 1. Exercise Analysis

428

429 Fig. 2a- Weight Bearing

430

431 Fig. 2b- Planes of Movement

432

433 Table 2. CERT Scoring

434

435 Fig. 3- Venn Diagram of Exercise Elements

436

437 Fig. 4 CERT Scoring Summary

438

439

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