



Kate Sheridan puts Orna Cunningham through the FMS strength and flexibility assessment; and (inset), John Murphy massages Orna's injured calf muscles. EL KEEGAN

Bouncing back better than before

It was great to see Orna back in clinic. Her injury has now resolved by 90pc, and she has resumed running. She has no shin pain, and has been compliant with using the foam roller and doing some calf strengthening work.

Christmas intervened after Orna's first visit, so it was a four-week gap between seeing her — usually a review one week after the first consult is good, to ensure understanding of the injury and compliance with correct activity and rehab. Often the hands-on work can be done by the patient or family members, so I often encourage this as it saves on cost.

Muscle injuries, in reality, can take three to four months to heal when reviewed using MRI scanning. However, the pain may be gone after two to three weeks. For Orna to get rid of the last bit of thickened tissue around the injury, I suggested that she continues with a mix of soft-tissue massage, deep-tissue sports massage or friction massage from a friend for a few minutes every second day, for another 10 days.

If the thickened tissue does not heal well then it is likely to cause a re-injury. Reviewing this in another month in clinic is an excellent idea, and if still struggling around this area, then using dry needling or deeper soft tissue

JOHN C MURPHY PHYSIO

Orna Cunningham was back in John Murphy's clinic to assess how her running injury is healing. Here they both give their views on the session

release techniques will do the job.

Orna is in her early 20s, so this injury is not age associated — it's amazing how quickly the body recovers up until the age of 30. After that, injuries occur more easily and take longer to resolve. On her second visit last week, I decided we needed a test of baseline function. With functional movement screening (FMS), a patient is assessed in seven different patterns of movement. Orna scored 6/6 in the two flexibility tests, but only 7/15 in the other five tests which combine strength and flexibility. So a result of 13/21 looks great, but still points

to a lack of strength and stability. This exposes a patient to unnecessary injury risk.

The next stage of Orna's rehab is to work with our physio Kate Sheridan, who is also a certified strength and conditioning coach. This stage will get the athlete to a physical condition which is better than pre-injury.

Kate will work with Orna in a one-to-one rehab setting. A note of caution is that gains are often rapid and significant within eight weeks, as muscles start working efficiently. These gains will be lost just as quickly — in fact if you stop after eight weeks then the great gains are gone by week 16-20. A real change in terms of function and mechanics requires a nine to 12-month programme.

I will review Orna in another few weeks. Strengthening will provide a better foundation for mechanics, which will limit damage to the body due to sporting participation.

Finally, if you have a flexible body, this is excellent but you do need suitable strengthening and stability to offer those mobile joints scaffolding. If you are inflexible, developing better functional range is vital.

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