This year’s competition saw a return to Breaffy House Hotel in Castlebar – a quiet provincial town that is the capital of Co Mayo in the northwest of Ireland – a part of the country famous for its rain. So, the good news was that it didn’t rain throughout the championships until the very end, in fact, the locals could only express their surprise at how good the weather was and their concern that tourists might go home thinking it was a sunny holiday destination only to be disappointed on their return!

Chiropractors Freya Moran, Paula Hoilvala and Rob Scott attended the European Outdoor Championships for four days of hard work. The first day was quiet as usual while the athletes worked out where we were stationed and then on Day 2 all hell broke loose! We treated about 50 athletes and that set the pattern for the rest of the event. It was a bit of an eye opener for Paula as it was her first FICS event but she quickly settled into things and we ran the clinic with surprising efficiency.

Predictably, Tug of War competitors suffer mostly from low back complaints (40%), thoracic spine complaints (22%) and shoulders and necks (40%). There is also a huge amount of muscle injuries and a lot of kinesio tape goes into making an event like this happen for all.

More and more international teams are now bringing their own physios/therapists with them but the number of countries coming to see us has actually increased. I am not sure whether that is down to more countries taking part or whether it reflects on the scope of our care but we still see athletes even though they have their own medical support. A sign that we must be doing something right.
The Tug of War International Federation (TWIF) are very welcoming hosts and now treat us as family and I can only urge others to come and have a few days hard work and fun. The next event is the World Championships in September 2020 in Getxo, Northern Spain. It will be sunny there and I am told the local wines are good – please join me.

Here is a quick resume of our activities in Castlebar.

We saw 131 athletes in total but delivered about 197 individual treatments.

The split between chronic and acute patients was almost 50%. The definition of acute was that they had incurred the injury during the current event. And chronic was defined by the fact this was an old injury that was unrelated to the current event.

Areas of treatment were no great surprise with lumbar (Lx), thoracic (Tx) and cervical (Cx) spine and the shoulder (GH) being the most involved. The detail of the treatments was recorded and could be used in further research.

Usage by countries was largely predicted by lack of medical team

We took pain scores for each new patient before and after the first treatment – the results of which can be seen below. VAS scores are a commonly used pain indicator where the patient marks their own pain out 0-10. It is probably easier to understand that the average pre-treatment score was 6 and the average post-treatment score was 2.
To my knowledge, there were 3 cases of extreme cramp and all in the younger age group and all male. These were all dealt with by the ambulance staff and to some extent do not come under our remit. Whether this was due to poor hydration or poor diet is perhaps a question that should be asked.

I made contact with the researchers from The University of Duesto and I hope we can collaborate with them and collect more data for them. They will need to set out what detail they would like and we can see if we can include it in our note taking. I am quite happy to facilitate this.

Once again we were welcomed, looked after and enjoyed our time in Castlebar and I would like to thank all those who helped us both behind the scenes and by the larger tug of war family.

I hope the experience was good enough for my two assistants to want to do it again!

Sincerely submitted
Rob Scott
FICS Sports Chiropractic