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Football: the new drug in the fight against lifestyle diseases

England’s poor performance at Euro 2016, declining grassroots football participation and The FA under pressure to reform; it all paints a sorry state of affairs for the national game. Despite this, football remains high on the agenda for development agencies.

In recent months Dr Dan Parnell, Research Director at ConnectSport, travelled to Denmark to meet Professor Peter Krustrup of the University of Copenhagen to discuss the role of team sports in health promotion. A key part of the conversation was the role of (i) professional football clubs and (ii) football as an activity in tackling lifestyle diseases.

Football and team sports are becoming a key interest for policy-makers and health professionals aiming to influence physical activity levels and tackle lifestyle diseases. This is a result of the growing amount of research on football and health.

This short article seeks to highlight the body of work undertaken by Peter and his colleagues. Peter’s research has shown that football is an effective weapon against lifestyle diseases. Their research establishes the health effects of football for children, adult men and women, the elderly, and people with diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. Peter provides an insight into his work in the video below which champions football as “an alternative to drugs in the fight against lifestyle diseases”.

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Dr Dan Parnell is Research Director at @ConnectSport and an active researcher and senior lecturer in Business Management at Manchester Metropolitan University. His research interests cover the sport and leisure sectors within the UK and he works globally on a number of projects, in particular the social role of sport. Contact d.parnell@mmu.ac.uk or follow @parnell_daniel on Twitter or access his research here.