

Abstract for Black Forest Forum 2013:

Injuries and illnesses in competing master athletes: Results from the 2012 European Veteran Athletics Championships (EVACS)

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Little is known on the risk of injuries and illnesses in master athletes during track and field competition. Aim of the study was to assess numbers of injuries and illnesses during the 2012 European Veteran Athletics Championships and to unravel possible relationships with age and athletic event. The medical staff in the stadium filled out a report form for each injury or illness occurring during the championships. For statistical analysis, age and event groups were defined. 3277 athletes participated in 6704 events. 116 registration cards were analysed. Average age was 58.39 (+/-13.10) years. There were 69 musculoskeletal injuries, 23 wounds, 10 insect bites and 14 illnesses with a similar incidence in the gender groups. Most frequently injured body part was the thigh (23.91%) followed by Achilles tendon/ heel (18.48%) and knee (17.39%). Risk of injury was highest in heptathlon/decathlon. The incidence of injuries and illnesses in EVACS 2012 was apparently lower than in IAAF World Championships 2009 and 2011 as well as IAA European Indoor Championships 2011. No injuries occurred in athletes 80 years of age and older. There were significant differences in the incidence of injury between event groups, but not between age groups.

The present study suggests that healthy master athletes have a lower risk for injuries and illnesses during competition than young elite athletes. There is no evidence why they should avoid participating in master athletics competitions at any age and in any event.