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Combat sports injury on the rise as MMA gains popularity

The growing popularity of Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) fights and the quest for fitness have turned a lot of people into Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) enthusiasts.

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TOP PICKS



More and more MMA gyms have opened in Hong Kong by popular demand.

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While champions like Connor McGregor command a huge global audience, closer to home, we have the UFC flights in Macau and the Hong Kong Shooto Association that organises professional and amateur competitions. The sport is growing in both spectator numbers for professional fights and amateur players.

MMA is a full-contact combat sport that involves a high-intensity, full-body workout, resulting in tip top physical fitness. It combines the skills of boxing, jiu jitsu, karate, muay thai, wrestling and judo, demanding a high level of endurance and coordination, making it both diverse and challenging.

With more people engaging in the training of MMA, related injuries have become more common. Miguel Rodriguez, a tennis coach based in Hong Kong, has practiced MMA for two years. During a training session last July, he got hit in the nose and since then had had difficulty breathing.



Miguel Rodriguez is an athlete who enjoys a wide variety of sports. He sustained a nose injury last year during an MMA session. Courtesy to Evoque Portraits.

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Rodriguez said, “The left side of my nose had always been a bit blocked since I was a kid and the injury made it worse. I was practically breathing through one nostril for several months and it was worse when I was sleeping since I’d be breathing through my mouth which got very dry. Eventually I went to see doctors for help.”

Originally from Barcelona, Spain, Rodriguez leads a very active life. Apart from tennis and MMA, he has also done triathlons, plays Australian football, dives and surfs. Being able to breathe normally is important for a dedicated athlete like him.

“The nasal septum, which is the midline cartilage and bone in the nasal cavity that divides it in two halves, is a structure commonly injured in contact sports. Sometimes it happens when one is young and doesn’t realise it. However, it can be aggravated when you engage in combat sports later and the deformity becomes more severe. It can also be caused by car accidents,” said Dr Terry Hung, Specialist in Otorhinolaryngology.

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A deviate septum can block the airway and make it difficult for the patient to breathe. It is a structural damage that can only be corrected by surgery. Traditionally, septoplasty is performed inside the nostril to correct the deviated septum. However, in Rodriguez’s case, Dr Hung recommended extracorporeal septoplasty during which the whole crooked septum is taken out, straightened, reconstructed and then “re-implanted” back in the nose.



“The procedure takes about three hours which is longer than the 45 minutes it takes for conventional septoplasty but it is more thorough and is performed in cases where the latter has failed or is not suitable for the patient. There is no open wound as the septum is taken and re-implanted through the nostril. The patient can resume non-combat sports in two weeks,” said Dr Hung.

Rodriguez received the procedure in February at Matilda Hospital International at the Peak and has recently resumed MMA sparring with his coach. However, for precautions, he is wearing a protective headgear to safeguard his nose.

“Now I can breathe even better than before the injury. Even my wife has noticed the improvement because I no longer wake up in the middle of the night because I couldn’t breathe,” said Rodriguez.

“However, I got to say that my injury was just an accident and accidents happen. MMA is an excellent sport that helps you to get fit. You can spar with your coach and with people of different levels in one session together, and sometimes with others watching so it is very social,” he added.



Matilda Hospital’s patient service team helps patients navigate all the treatment options available to them.

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The number of sports-related injuries has been on the rise in recent years as the public becomes increasingly focused on fitness. The **Matilda Hospital**, which has a team of surgeons who can support patients as soon as they start looking for appointments, procedures, price estimations, insurance administration, transport and follow up, providing a seamless medical concierge service dedicated to helping patients to find the appropriate care for their condition.

Treating sports injuries

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