

# AB215. SOH22ABS210. Return to play in Gaelic games post coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): a worrying trend in maxillofacial injuries

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**Background:** Gaelic football, hurling and camogie were disrupted by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. In March 2020 all GAA activity was suspended. Collective training and competitions resumed in April 2021. The aim of this study is to compare the incidence of GAA-related facial fractures in the pre-COVID period with their incidence following the return to play.

**Methods:** Patients presenting with GAA-related facial fractures during September 2019–November 2021 were identified, representing six months of data from the pre-COVID era, 14 months when activity was suspended and six months following return to play. The following variables were recorded: sporting activity, aetiology and site of injury, and treatment provided.

**Results:** A total of 101 GAA-related facial fractures were identified between September 2019 and November 2021. Twenty-six facial fractures occurred in the six months before COVID-19, 34 in the following 14 months whilst activity was prohibited and 41 facial fractures in the 6 months after resumption of play. A 58% (n=15) increase in facial fractures was observed in the 6-month period after the return to play compared to pre-COVID era. Mandibular fractures were most common (n=18), followed by ZMC (n=11). The majority (n=31) of fractures occurred during matches. Almost a quarter of fractures (n=10) were the result of an

altercation off the ball. Eighteen patients (43%) required admission for operative intervention.

**Conclusions:** There appears to be an increase in patients playing GAA presenting with facial fractures in the post COVID era 6 months after the return to play compared to the pre COVID era.

**Keywords:** Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19); facial injuries; GAA; maxillofacial; trauma

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## Footnote

*Conflicts of Interest:* The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

*Ethical Statement:* The authors are accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

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