

NBA doctors worry about long term heart damage to players who get the coronavirus

“What if a 24-year-old catches [COVID-19] in Orlando and, in 14 days, he quarantines and is fine, but then he has these everlasting heart problems? [Or he] gets winded so easily, or he becomes a little bit too susceptible to fatigue? ... These are all the unknowns,” [says an anonymous NBA team manager.]

The NBA is preparing to restart the season, with 22 teams reporting this week to the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex near Orlando for training camp. Games are scheduled to resume on July 30.

Any player who tests positive faces a two-week quarantine period before he can be cleared to return to the court. A physician will determine when the isolation period is over, a process that will include a cardiac screening.

Matthew Martinez, a consulting cardiologist for the NBA Players Association, stressed to ESPN that players will need time to rest after a positive test because doctors believe “the amount of cardiac damage can increase if you continue to exercise in the face of an active infection.”

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According to the American College of Cardiology’s Sports and Exercise Cardiology Council, “Acute cardiac injury ... occur(s) in up to 22 percent of hospitalized patients with COVID-19, which is significantly higher compared with the approximately 1 percent prevalence in non-COVID-19 acute viral infections.”

Myocarditis “could result in cardiac dysfunction, arrhythmias, and death,” the council said.

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