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5-fold increase in sudden cardiac deaths of FIFA players in 2021

A guest post by Yaffa Shir-Raz

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Collated from a twitter thread by Yaffa Shir-Raz

The Israeli "Real-Time News" reports: Breaking news: 500% increase in deaths - SCD/SUD of FIFA players in 2021

Not 24 athletes, not 30, nor 75 - Since December, 183 professional athletes and coaches have suddenly collapsed! 108 of them died! According to the literature, the phenomenon of collapsing athlete breakdown for reasons unrelated to injury is rare.

So what is causing this sudden epidemic?

Visit the COVID-19 Information Center for vaccine resources.

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kylewarnermtb Thanks to everyone that has been supportive and understanding of me speaking out on this issue. Many of you know me as a pretty reasonable and caring guy and I never intended to be a part of this whole conversation.

However after my experience this summer, and listening to literally thousands of similar stories I feel like I need to stand up for the people who

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The "Real-Time News" investigation presents a list of athletes who were injured and/or died. Analyzing the list we found:

- Most athletes are males (only 15 females)
- TheVast majority are 17-40 years. Only 21 are older (5 aged 42-45, six aged 46-49, 7 aged 51-54, and 3 others aged 60-64).

<https://stephenc.substack.com/p/5-fold-increase-in-sudden-cardiac>

- 23 are teenagers, aged 12-17, 16 died.



- In over 80 of the cases, such as football stars Sergio Aguero and Christian Eriksen, the athletes collapsed while playing, racing or training, or immediately after.



- In most cases, it has been reported that the cause of the collapse is heart-related, including myocarditis, pericarditis, heart attacks, or cardiac arrest.
- The second cause reported is clotting events.

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We emphasize that the list we have is even longer, but for the sake of caution, dozens of cases were removed, from it in which we did not have full details, so that only the cases that were reported in detail were included.

In addition, cases were removed in which evidence of previous risk factors was mentioned, such as a cardiac disease or diabetes.

To get a better picture of the data compared to previous years, we only looked at data relating to deaths among athletes registered with FIFA, and compared the data regarding the number of SCD (sudden cardiac death)/SUD (sudden unexplained death) among these athletes in previous years, to the number of cases in 2021.

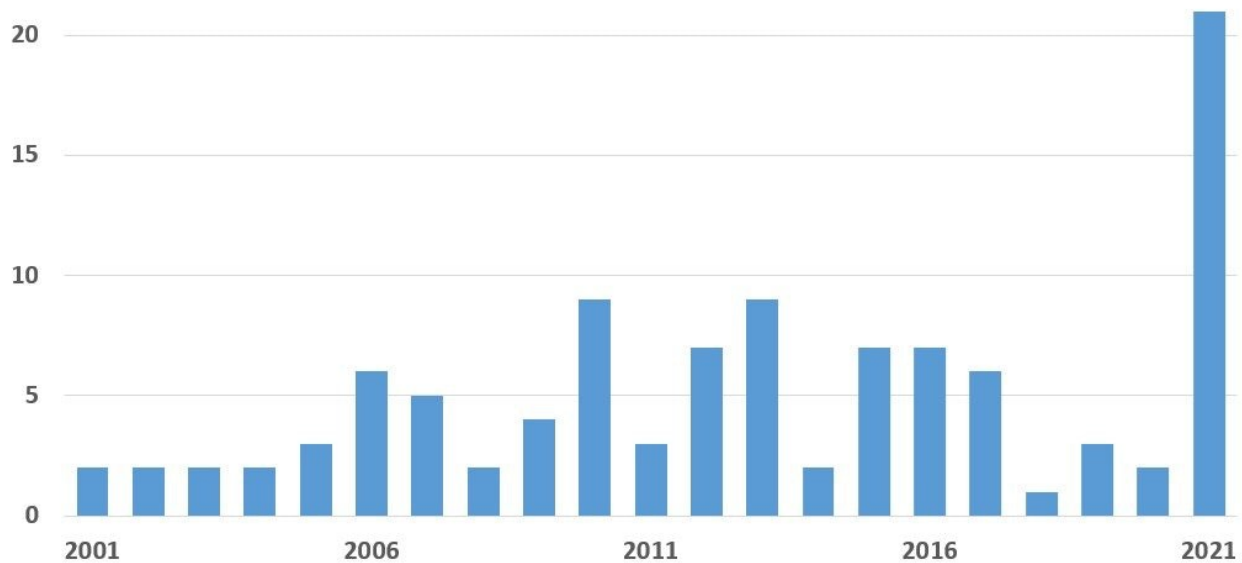
To find out how many deaths actually occurred during the last two decades among FIFA players (2001-2020), we used Wikipedia - "[List of association footballers who died while playing](#)". To know how many cases occurred in 2021, we used the list collected by us in "Real-Time News" (which includes the cases noted in Wikipedia for 2021).

Dr. Josh Guetzkow, a senior lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and the Institute of Criminology at the Hebrew University, analyzed the data. "An article published in the British Medical Journal shows that the risk of SCD is one in 50,000 (with a range from one in 30,000 to one in 80,000)," he explains. "According to FIFA data, in 2000 there were 242,000 athletes registered in the association, and in 2006 there were 265,000 athletes registered. Assuming FIFA has not changed significantly in twenty years, can expect about 5 deaths a year".

According to Wikipedia, under "[List of association footballers who died while playing](#)", in 2001-2020 there was an average of 4.2 deaths per year attributed to SCD or SUD, the vast majority being SCD. In contrast, in 2021, according to our list, there were 21 cases of SCD/SUD among FIFA players. In other words, instead of 4 SCD/SUD deaths per year (according to Wikipedia data), or 5 cases per year (calculated according to the BMJ) during 2001-2020, 21 players have died so far this year.

That is, about 5 times more than the annual average!

מספר מקרי המוות של שחקני כדורגל ב-FIFA בכל שנה, 2001-2021



This figure is found to be statistically significant. In fact, there is no other year since 2001 where the difference between the number of observed cases of SCD/SUD and the expected number is statistically significant. In 2021 it is highly statistically significant and only likely to happen by chance about 2 in 1,000 times.

Yaffa's notes:

- List of athletes who have been injured and/or died since December 2020

Stephen's notes:

- A quick and dirty statistical analysis (not rigorous, but good enough for a sanity check of the "this figure is found to be statistically significant"):

When counting events like SCD, we expect a certain base rate and the events will follow what is called a Poisson distribution. One property of the Poisson distribution is that the standard deviation (a measure of how much variability from random chance) is the square root of the base rate.

If we typically see 4 events per year, the standard deviation will be 2, and 95% of the time we will see something within 2 standard deviations from that base rate.

If we see 20 events in one year that's 8 standard deviations from the mean, so 20 events is very very unusual.

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