Kevin Ware's Broken Leg May Be Linked to Vitamin D Deficiency

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Recently, basketball fans across the country collectively gasped when University of Louisville guard Kevin Ware broke his leg during an NCAA game against Duke University. News reports initially called Ware's attempt to block an opponent's three-point shot—and subsequent on-air crumple—a "gruesome" and horrifying "freak accident." But speculation that a diet deficient in vitamin D and calcium may have played a role in the athlete's injury circulated quickly, reported Forbes.

After the incident, one TV news doctor pronounced that the injury (a double compound fracture) to Ware's lower leg (the tibia and fibula) was rare. The doc had only seen such trauma sustained in two instances: car accidents and war. What's more, a former New York Jets physician told ABC News he felt that Ware must have had pre-existing stress fractures for such an intense injury to occur. In that same report, Tim Hewett, director of sports and medicine research at Ohio State University, proposed the possibility that vitamin deficiencies might be to blame. If so, Ware's weakened bones may have been waiting for him to take the step that caused his leg to snap.

Vitamin D deficiency among African Americans is well-documented. Insufficient levels of this nutrient are more prevalent among them than any other U.S. population group. This primarily happens because the pigmentation that causes black people to have darker complexions also reduces vitamin D production in the skin.

Paired with the possibility of less-than-sufficient amounts of D in his diet and the intense physical stress of professional basketball, Ware's injury may have been inevitable. What's more, his on-court collapse incited speculation about vitamin D deficiency among collegiate athletes in general. Now, some have said more research needs to be done among this particular group of at-risk players.

But since the correct cause of Ware's injury went undisclosed, some felt the mainstream press missed a perfect opportunity to discuss vitamin D deficiency among African Americans. Doctors have said the deficiency contributes to higher rates of diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular disease among black people.

Interestingly, another study showed that higher doses of vitamin D were linked with hardening of arteries in African Americans. Click here to read more.

To watch the video of Ware's injury, click here.

To read the Forbes article, click here.

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