CASE STUDY

Prevention is better than cure Preventing injury in the WA Police Force

In recent years, the WA State Government has invested heavily in the WA Police Force, aiming for greater age and gender diversity and increasing the number of new recruits to 300-400 annually. The six-month academy training program undertaken by these new police recruits are often physically and mentally challenging.

It has been found that as recruits progress through their training, musculoskeletal injuries occur. These injuries can drastically delay recruits' progress through the training program and can lead to ongoing or recurring injuries and possibly early onset osteoarthritis. These injuries represent a real personal cost to recruits and a financial cost to the WA Police Force for absenteeism and related healthcare treatments.

In a world first, the WA Police Force and ECU decided to collaborate on ground-breaking research to see how the number of musculoskeletal injuries in training recruits could be reduced or prevented. For the first time, outcomes from ECU researcher, Dr Murphy, will form the foundation of new and improved physical training standards, create robust training practices and reduce the risk of injury for a diverse range of police recruits.

The Researcher



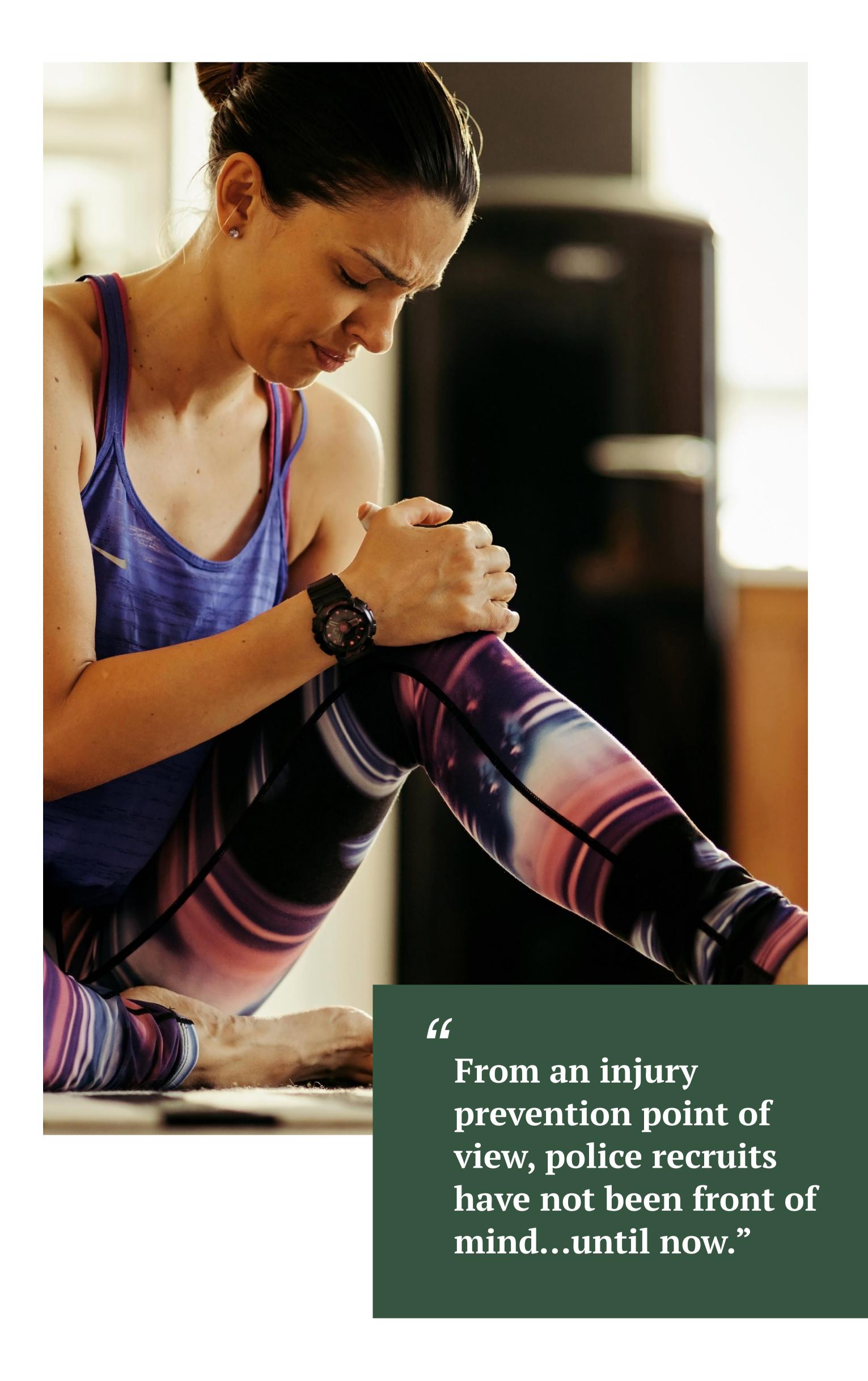
Dr Myles Murphy is a postdoctoral clinician researcher with Edith Cowan University's Nutrition & Health Innovation Research Institute. His research involves investigating the drivers of pain and impairment in people with lower-limb musculoskeletal injury and disability, as well as novel neuroscience interventions to address these impairments.

As an Australian Physiotherapy Association titled Sport and Exercise Physiotherapist, Dr Murphy has worked clinically as a physiotherapist for variety of elite sporting teams including the Fremantle AFLW and the Perth Scorchers.

Dr Murphy is passionate about injury prevention and in his role, often sees the full impact preventable injuries have on people.

"My research is working towards reducing the burden of injury in the WA Police Force, ensuring recruits can complete as much of the program as possible without injury." He said research found that there were less than ten studies on injury profiles in law enforcement recruits around the world, including organisations such as the FBI.

"This research has an impact on the longevity of the WA Police Force's workforce and may significantly affect people's ability to work and train and support the community," Dr Murphy said.



Pathway to Impact

Research Driver

How can musculoskeletal injuries received by a diverse range of police recruits be reduced through tailored programs and prevention strategies?

Current Work

Identifying who is at risk of being injured and which activities cause injuries by doing body scans.

Developing a new surveillance system by conducting focus groups with Australian injury experts and medical staff, and interviewing WA Police Force staff.

Conducting an analysis of the economic costs of these injuries.

Future Impact

This research will result in a drastic decrease in the number of injuries to a diverse range of Australian police recruits while maintaining training standards. This will lead to a healthier and more effective police force and reduce injury management costs.

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Understanding the number and types of injuries experienced by police recruits in training is a world first and will reduce the burden of injury for WA Police Force and its staff. The ultimate goal is to train our police recruits in a way that minimises injuries and support a robust, healthy workforce.

Initial Findings

Knee injuries, followed by shoulder and lower leg injuries, are the biggest problem in WA Police Force recruit training. Common types of injuries are to ligaments, joints, muscles and tendons. Men are 40% less likely to be injured than women and recruits aged under 30 years are 50% less likely to be injured than older colleagues.

The Next Step

Develop and pilot revolutionary injury prevention training programs for WA Police Force recruits which are tailored to their specific fitness level, age and gender.



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