**People’s perceptions and experiences of returning to sport after a myocardial infarction**

**Background:** Guidelines for returning to sport after myocardial infarction (MI) mostly encompass physical signs and symptoms, with psychosocial factors being less comprehensively considered. Because previous research has focused on returning to low to moderate levels of physical activity after MI, we lack information about the experiences and psychosocial needs of highly active populations returning to sport after MI. The study aim was to explore people’s perceptions and experiences of returning to sport after a MI.

**Method:** Qualitative description methodology informed the study design. 30-60-minute semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 people who had experienced an MI within the past two years and were regularly participating in sporting activities prior to their MI. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The data were analysed using Thomas’s General Inductive Analysis to generate themes.

**Results:** The key themes were: 1) Reconciling an active identity with a new reality; 2) Feeling vulnerable; 3) The need for strong and relevant support; and 4) Navigating my own path. All participants viewed sport participation as integral to their identify and many grappled with having an MI despite their healthy lifestyle. Fear, uncertainty and weighing up risks versus benefits were prominent during recovery. Participants were highly motivated to return to sport but often lacked clear and relevant guidance to support decision making for how to do so.

**Conclusion:** The study findings provide insights into the broader psychosocial needs of people wanting to return to sport after MI and potential ways for health professionals to support their aspirations.