Quality Vs. Quantity?

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It's not how much you lift that matters, it's how you lift that matters. There, I said it. Now, some might look at me and think that I'm only saying that because I'm not the most muscular guy in the room, but the truth is that there is a plethora of research available to support that good form with resistance training not only improves quality and efficiency of muscle recruitment, but it also decreases the risk of injury when participating in competition.

Let's take ACL tears for example. Research has shown approximately 70% of ACL tears are typically non-contact injuries; meaning the athlete injury is not due to contact from an opponent. According to NCAA statistics, female athletes are 2-8 times more likely to tear their ACLs, however, there are a greater number of male ACL injuries due to more men participating in athletics.

So why does an athlete tear their ACL? Most commonly the injury is due to poor landing mechanics, occurs during the act of deceleration or the presence of poor knee position during cutting, turning or pivoting maneuvers.

The solution to proper form is hip strength! When performing your squats or lunges as part of your resistance training, be sure that you use a mirror and focus on form before you try to advance your resistance. The major points to remember is that your knees should not come closer together then where they are when you are standing still and your knees should not move forward beyond your toes. By focusing on correct squat posture and starting the training process at low weights, you can use form as a guide as to when you have reached fatigue during your exercise bouts. This posture can then be carried over into lunge exercises and even single-leg and double-leg plyometric activities.

But what if you are not an athlete? Can you get by with bad lifting posture if it is your goal to just increase resistance? Well, you could, but you still might experience an increase in anterior knee pain or knee pain in front part of your knee. If you are not an athlete, the benefits of proper form still carry over to every day tasks such as lifting heavy objects from the floor. Not only will proper form reduce the likelihood of knee pain, but it will also help prevent back pain.

The take home message is form is key and without proper form the likelihood of increased hip, knee and back pain is possible. Like my college professor Dr. Kalm used to say, "Practice does not make perfect. Perfect practice makes perfect."