LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bone density in elderly women

EDITOR,—In the article by Rhodes et al. “Effects of one year of resistance training on the relation between muscular strength and bone density in elderly women”, I was surprised to see no mention of HRT status in the women in the trial. Given the relatively small number of women taking part, surely this is quite an important variable?

I am aware of a single blind study which the women were randomized to, which is currently being analyzed. The results will be published soon. The study is designed not only to measure bone density changes, but also to determine whether women who receive hormone replacement therapy (HRT) are able to increase their bone density.

I believe that the study is important, as it is the first to investigate the relationship between muscular strength and bone density in elderly women.

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Author’s reply

EDITOR,—The answer to this inquiry is very simple. None of the women in our study were on hormone replacement therapy.

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Who should be blinded?

EDITOR,—I was very pleased to read the recent article by Eston and Rowlands1 on the various stages of development of a research project. It is important to have papers on research methodology that deal specifically with sports science/medicine examples.

Even though the authors described the paper as “a brief guide to the most common sequence of stages”, it nevertheless addressed many good points about research design. However, their description of blinding was perhaps oversimplified, disregarding experimental design in some areas of sports medicine research. They stated that in a single blind study the participants do not know which treatment they are receiving, and in double blind studies neither the participants nor the tester know which treatment the participants are receiving.

Research in sport and exercise medicine encompasses a number of professions, who differ in the way they provide treatments and interventions. In some of these disciplines, the way the intervention is administered will prevent researchers from blinding the investigation as described in the paper. Recent work on the design of randomised clinical trials has suggested that a study may be described as single blind if one of the groups of people involved does not know which intervention has been given to each participant.1 It was added that it may be the investigators assessing the outcomes that are blinded.

A recently published paper sought to determine the effects of stretching before exercise on lower limb injury.2 The authors of this study were able to claim that the study was single blind, despite the fact that all participants were aware of the intervention they were receiving. The blinding was achieved by masking the practitioner who diagnosed the injuries to the patient allocation. Blinding the examiner rather than the patient is a common practice when there is no other way to disguise the specific treatment.

A traditional view may state that blinding must be carried out as described by Eston and Rowlands.1 However, the design strategy needs to be flexible enough to incorporate the distinctive features of the intervention under investigation.

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The genetics of physical fitness

EDITOR,—Might I briefly comment on Dr Lavin’s observation that elite athletes, whom he classifies as “freaks”, “are as removed from real life as it is possible to be?” “Real life” is what is all around us, from the homeless in the street to the most highly paid sportsmen, pop, or business star. Humphry Lyttelton, whose jazz talents took him on a different career path from his high positioned family, was told once by his uncle “Y ours is a di...” To which he replied “No, it is the world”. Which to me is the same world as yours, only bigger”.

Elite competitors have a talent which they market to their best and brief advantage, as do many in the creative arts, sciences, and professions. They also bring enjoyment to many of our lives, and are no more—and no less “freaks” than genetic outliers in any of the talents.

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Serum concentrations of P-selectin decline rapidly in resting humans

EDITOR,—In assessing the health benefits and risks of physical activity, there has been much interest in the relation between exercise and the immune and inflammatory responses. However, only a very limited number of studies have examined the role of exercise on adhesion molecule profiles. P-selectin (CD62P) is an adhesion molecule expressed on activated platelets and endothelial cell-surface is one of a group of related molecules that play an important role in leukocyte rolling on the vascular endothelium. Therefore it is intimately involved in the regulation of immune and inflammatory responses. Circulating forms of several adhesion molecules, including P-selectin, have been observed in humans, and elevated levels may reflect acute infection or inflammation. Alterations to the concentrations of circulating adhesion molecules have also been associated with increased risk of specific diseases. High levels of soluble P-selectin, for example, have been associated with cardiovascular risk.3

My colleagues and I are interested in the influence of smoking on the aetiology of chronic inflammatory periodontal disease and have recently completed a study in which we observed the acute in vivo effect of smoking a standard 2R1 research cigarette on the serum concentration of a range of adhesion molecules and on adhesion molecule expression on circulating monocytes and neutrophils.2 As part of the experimental protocol, all subjects, who were apparently healthy, rested in a dental chair in a semi-reclined position for one hour. There were no statistically significant differences between the serum levels of soluble P-selectin of heavy smokers (n = 9; serum cotinine concentration>100 ng/ml), light smokers (n = 10; serum cotinine concentration<60 ng/ml), and non-smokers (n = 10; serum cotinine concentration<10 ng/ml) at baseline. However, an incidental and unexpected observation was that soluble P-selectin concentrations fell significantly over the one hour rest period, independently of smoking status, as shown in fig 1.

It may be relevant to note that Kirkpatrick et al4 reported an increase in soluble P-selectin on repeated exercise in subjects with intermittent claudication. They concluded that the rise in soluble P-selectin after exercise may indicate progressive platelet


Figure 1 Mean concentration of soluble P-selectin (ng/ml) in serum of resting heavy smokers, light smokers, and non-smokers at baseline and various time points after smoking a standard 2R1 research cigarette (non-smokers did not smoke). Differences in the concentration of soluble P-selectin between smoking groups at baseline were analysed using a two group t test. No significant differences were found. Variations in the concentration of soluble P-selectin, with respect to smoking group and time, were measured by two way repeated measures analysis of variance with a post-analysis contrast performed using the Student-Neuman-Keuls method. The decrease in the concentration of soluble P-selectin with time was significant in all smoking groups (p<0.001). Adapted from Scott et al.5

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**BOOK REVIEWS**


Athletes who want up to date advice on sports nutrition are the targeted readers for this book. It would also be a useful addition to the bookshelf of a sports coach or scientist.

The second edition enhances the chapters on weight control and eating disorders and covers the full spectrum of sports nutrition, with advice for training, competing, and recovery, as well as healthy eating for life.

The author is one of the best known writers on sports nutrition in the United States, a registered dietitian and athlete. She deals with the subject in a “user friendly” American style with lots of practical advice, as well as the theory behind why certain practices should/shold not be carried out.

About one third of the book is devoted to recipes, with a useful nutritional analysis. They are generally quick and easy to prepare, with ingredients that for the most part are available in the United Kingdom, although the terminology occasionally differs. As with all American cookbooks, the ingredients are measured in cups, which I find “off-putting”.

There is a good bibliography and reference section for those who want to delve deeper into specific subjects.

This is an excellent book if you are American, and I found much of the practical advice useful. For the British reader, there are perhaps too many references to American food products and RDAs referring to nutrients per pound body weight or to 8 oz of fluid, whereas we are now thinking in terms of kg and 100 ml respectively.

**Exercise at altitude**

**Editor,—**In the early sixties I established a record for the running ascent of Kilimanjaro (19 340 feet (5985 m)) of 6 hours and 48 minutes, and my colleague (and current Lon-
don marathoner) Norman Myers ran up and down the same mountain (36 miles) in 13 hours and 20 minutes, both from a start of around 6000 feet (1828 m), and both of us had previously shown that a period of rest can lead to a rapid decrease in circulating concentrations of soluble P-selectin. This observation is, to the best of our knowledge, entirely novel and may represent an important insight into the complex relation between physical activity and the inflammatory response. Further studies by those with expertise in sports physiology and medicine may be warranted.

**David A Scott**

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The keynote lectures by Professor Norbert Bachl (Austria) and Dr Bob Cantu (USA) have attracted a lot of interest but in view of recent events at the Sydney Olympics, the session hosted by the British Olympic Association and the Diplomates has also attracted a very large audience. Booking and enquiries should be made to Mrs Sue Roberts, BASEM Company Office, 12 Greenside Avenue, Frodsham, Cheshire WA6 7SA, UK.

Dilemmas in sport: a journey through ethics, the law and medicine

The Institute of Sports Medicine together with the Sports Medicine Section of the Royal Society of Medicine have organised a meeting entitled “Dilemmas in sport: a journey through ethics, the law and medicine”. This all day meeting will take place on 8 November 2000 at the Royal Society of Medicine in London. A wide range of speakers from the world of sport, politics, and the law will address many of the controversial aspects of sports medicine including the ethics of boxing and drug in sport. John Lloyd Parry, a BASEM stalwart, is the current President of the section of Sports Medicine at the RSM.

Drugs in sport

The issue of drugs in sport continues to become increasingly complex. Advising athletes about prohibited and permitted medications is difficult. New initiatives by the British National Formulary and MIMS should help doctors to avoid any possible prescribing pitfalls. UKSPORT have produced a Competitors’ and Officials’ guide which has been made available to teams and officials at major events. There is also an information line at UK Sport, which is supported by a range of fact sheets.

Centre for Sport and Exercise Science

Sheffield Hallam University have renamed their Sports Science Research Institute. It will now be known as the Centre for Sport and Exercise Science (CSES). It will have three subdivisions: the Centre for Sport Performance, the Centre for Corporate Wellness, and the Centre for Exercise and Health. It is fascinating to see this evolution of sports science and the greater inclusion of aspects of exercise and health.

How to complain about the Journal!

You probably didn’t know this but this journal, as with other journals published by the BMJ Publishing Group, is regulated by the press complaints commission. The publishing group pay a fee to be part of this system of regulation and adhere to a code of practice and are professionally self-regulating. The code of practice includes guidance on maintaining the highest professional and ethical standards. It protects both the rights of the individual and the public’s right to know. If you do have a problem with any aspect of the journal, please do let us know and we will try to resolve any difficulties. If you have a serious problem, a copy of the guidance notes may be obtained from the Press Complaints Commission, 1 Salisbury Square, London EC4Y 8JB, UK.

The new chapters included and the old chapters dropped are all worthwhile; perhaps there were constraints on book length.

On balance, I think that this is an excellent investment for the aspiring sports physician and a useful aide memoire to the established. I do not think that sports medicine has changed a lot in five years, but the second edition successfully builds on the breadth of the first.

NOTES AND NEWS

IOC Postgraduate Research Grant Programme 2001

The Museum and Olympic Studies Centre of the International Olympic Committee have launched their Postgraduate Research Grant Programme for 2001. These grants are intended to enable researchers in human and social sciences, who are interested in the Olympic games and Olympic sport, to study the historical archives of the IOC. These grants are open to postgraduate students and university staff who have completed their masters or doctorate in the last five years. The closing date for applications is 1 December, 2000.

British Association of Immediate Care education programme

The British Association of Immediate Care have a very active education programme offering a range of courses for those involved in the provision of immediate medical care including doctors, nurses, paramedics, occupational health professionals, the emergency services and those involved in health care at sporting and other events. The Pre-hospital Emergency Care Certificate is perhaps the course most suitable for those providing medical cover at sporting events. A full brochure and booking form is available from BASICS Education Ltd, 7 Black Horse Lane, Ipswich IP1 2EF, UK.

BASEM 2000 Congress

The BASEM 2000 Congress takes place from 3–5 November, 2000 at the Hilton Puckrup Hall Hotel in Tewkesbury, UK. There has been considerable national and international interest in the meeting this year. The keynote lectures by Professor Norbert
An introduction to sports physiotherapy
28 October 2000; Wales, UK
Further details: Dawn Walling. Tel: +44 (0)20 7251 0583 x 238; email: dawn.walling@ nsmi.org.uk

British Association of Sport and Exercise Medicine congress
3–5 November 2000; Tewkesbury, UK
Final bookings should be received by 2 October 2000.
Lectures include:
- Muscular conditioning during space station MIR flight
- Health enhancing physical activity—an upgrowing challenge for sports medicine
Please note that there have been some small changes to the congress programme.
Further details: Mrs Sue Roberts, BASEM Company Office, 12 Greenside Avenue, Frodsham, Cheshire WA6 7SA. Tel/fax: 01928 732 961; email: basemoffice@ compuserve.com
Website: www.pmhcs.com/basem

6th International Sport Sciences Congress
3 November–5 November, 2000; Ankara, Turkey
Further details: Associate Professor G Demirhan, Hacettepe University, School of Sport Sciences and Technology, Beytepe 06532, Ankara, Turkey. Tel: 90 312 299 2167; email: demirhan@ada.net.tr

20th national congress of the Société Française de Médecine de Sport: Physical activity, sport and health
6–8 December 2000; Paris, France
Topics include:
- Physical activity and fertility
- Sport and aging
- Rehabilitation
Further details: Pranacom, 40 rue des Blancs Manteaux, 75004 Paris, France. Email: pranacom.ifrance.com
Website: www.sfms.asso.fr

NSMI/BASEM Current concepts meeting on tendinopathies
8–9 December 2000; Cambridge, UK
Subjects covered include:
- Tendon science
- Achilles tendon
- Rotator cuff
Further details: Barry Hill, NSMI Medical Education, Medical College of St Bartholomew’s Hospital, Charterhouse Square, London EC1M 6BQ. Tel: 020 7251 0583 x237; fax: 020 7251 0774; email: barry.hill@ nsmi.org.uk
Website: www.nsni.org.uk

True or false?—answers
(T = true; F = false)
p 326: Petrella RJ. Is exercise effective treatment for osteoarthritis of the knee?
1(a) T; (b) F; (c) F; (d) T. 2(a) T; (b) T; (c) F; (d) F. 3(a) T; (b) T; (c) T; (d) T. 4(a) T; (b) T; (c) T; (d) T. 5(a) T; (b) F; (c) T; (d) T.
Bone density in elderly women

A R Crawfurd

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