

drugs and performance enhancers, and our possible conflicting roles as physicians asked to deal with athletes in these situations, challenged us to differentiate between an addiction and a disease. At what stage is drug abuse preventable? When should we test and what should we test for? What sanctions are appropriate? The contrasting opinions offered from the audience showed that there are many questions to be answered and few straightforward answers (how many of us have not speeded when it suited us, and how do we prevent the next generations of speeders?)

Professor Tim Noakes from South Africa gave this year's Joseph B Wolffe Memorial Lecture, and questioned the scientific basis of many currently accepted physiological tenets. Not only was this intellectually stimulating, but you were left wondering just how one prepares to give a lecture in front of 4000 people. This was as much a triumph for Professor Noakes' nerve as it was for his academic prowess.

Professor Peter Brukner of the Olympic Park Sports Medicine Centre, Melbourne, Australia, gave a refreshingly Antipodean approach to stress fractures in the athlete—proof positive that scientific material can be presented in an entertaining fashion. Indeed the quality of research coming out of Australia was a match for anything produced by the home team.

In order to get the most benefit from attending future ACSM meetings, I would give the following advice to future delegates:

- (1) Arrive at least 24 hours before the start of the academic programme and familiarise yourself with the conference venue. Plan ahead when it comes to deciding what sessions to attend. Many workshops are repeated during the week, and it should be possible to attend everything you want to without compromising your attendance at other sessions.
- (2) Present your own material—either in poster form, or preferably during one of the many clinical or scientific colloquia

dedicated to original research or interesting case studies. A word of warning—be prepared to defend your methods and decisions. The Americans are not as reserved as we British, and seem to relish giving presenters a hard time.

However, there was great variation in the quality of material presented, and I do not feel that we should have any fear of exposing our work to that form of scrutiny. Indeed, as a clinician, it appeared that we are much more willing to rely on our clinical acumen and decision making ability, rather than opting immediately for every conceivable (and invariably expensive) investigation.

- (3) Give the conference banquet a miss—it was overlong and unnecessarily self congratulatory.
- (4) Give yourself time to spend at the trade exhibition—brief intervals between lectures are not enough to devote to the many interesting stands. In addition, many sports medicine textbooks can be purchased for considerably lower prices than in the UK.

In conclusion, the ACSM annual congress is probably the most significant global event for the sports medicine specialist. Its sheer size and the variety of topics presented must make it unique among modern conferences. No matter what your own specialist interest, you are sure to find something that will educate and stimulate you to further study. The bias is invariably North American, and the delegate must be prepared to look objectively at the material presented, critically appraise its significance, and apply the best to his or her own environment or practice. I would certainly return—but feel that a visit every third or fourth year would be sufficient to keep abreast of developments in American sports medicine.

M CULLEN

Belfast

Advanced team physician course, Scottsdale, Arizona, USA, 29 February - 3 March 1996

Background

The advanced team physician course is a new educational offering by the American College of Sports Medicine [ACSM], established in conjunction with the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine [AOSSM] and the American Medical Society for Sports Medicine [AMSSM]. It has been designed to complement the ACSM's (now two part) team physician course. The 280 delegates were mainly from the USA, with backgrounds as primary care doctors and sports medicine physicians, with myself as the only doctor from the UK. The course was held at the Radisson Resort

Hotel in Scottsdale on the outskirts of Phoenix in Arizona. Facilities were of high standard and the technical support proved smooth and efficient. The faculty consisted of 14 high profile sports medicine physicians and surgeons representing the organising societies. These included Stanley Herring and Steven Van Camp (president) of the ACSM; Douglas McKeag (president), John Lombardo and James Puffer of the AMSSM; and John Bergfeld and Kevin Black of the AOSSM. Together, they provided team care for no less than the Cleveland Browns, Seattle Seahawks, New York Jets, Indianapolis Colts, and Univer-

sities of Ohio State, Penn State, UCLA, Washington, Vanderbilt and India [na].

The course was held in one to two sessions per day on four consecutive days. Timetabled into the structure were periods that relied heavily on the active participation of the delegates. Keynote presentations were made by the faculty, followed by a short comment from a further faculty member, with a subsequent discussion period of 30-40 minutes. The emphasis on encouraging discussion and debate and hearing the experiences of other delegates on the chosen areas was most stimulating. Other sessions included "How I manage...", "Case presentations" and "Pearls of practice" where faculty members would, in short presentations, share their usual practice or experiences with the audience. The final session concluded with a debate and a round table discussion. The course was accompanied by handouts which were on the whole helpful and very well referenced.

Impression

Overall I thoroughly enjoyed the course and felt that it has improved my knowledge and understanding on many issues. It was professionally organised and executed and provided a stimulating environment for discussion, both in and out of the formal sessions. The course format relied on a significant input from the audience and it was gratifying to see the delegates' enthusiasm that caused every session to overrun, with questions still to be asked and comments to be made. Hearing the views and often differing opinions between members of the faculty was enlightening, and the skilled chairmanship of the sessions made sure that none got away without having to commit themselves. At times, however, the use of unfamiliar drug names did cause some degree of confusion. On balance, I believe the course

largely achieved its aims of "addressing state-of-the-art, cutting edge issues" and I would recommend the course to others believing that at £230, it does represent good value for money. Nevertheless, one does need to balance this with the significant cost of travel to and accommodation in the United States. The ongoing relationship between the BASM executive and the Sports Council's international office has enabled a small number of BASM members to attend international conferences and courses with substantial financial assistance, in this case representing 70% of the total costs. Their support for me on this occasion is gratefully acknowledged and will be matched by a continuing commitment to clinical sports medicine and sports medicine education.

The sports medicine system in the USA, with its established pathways for access to treatment and rehabilitation, is often envied. The epidemiological data, such as those held by National Center for Catastrophic Sports Injury Research and the National Collegiate Athletic Association, and the opportunities and funding for research are unfortunately not matched in the UK. The unprecedented availability of MRI scanning and how this is revealing the extent of associated articular cartilage damage, bone bruising, and meniscal injury in apparent "isolated" ligament rupture was illuminating. However, the recent shift towards medical practitioners paying a retainer fee for the "privilege" of providing care to high profile teams was of great concern to most delegates. It was also reassuring to see that despite a wealth of information, they also have similar difficulties to us in situations such as the practical aspects of return to play following the sporting head injury.

KEVIN BOYD

Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Introductory Sports Medicine (course)

22-27 September 1996; Lilleshall Hall National Sports Centre, Shropshire (residential) Further details: Education Office, British Association of Sport and Medicine, c/o The National Sports Medicine Institute, Medical College of St Bartholomew's Hospital, Charterhouse Square, London EC1M 6BQ. (Tel +44 (0)171 253 3244; fax +44 (0) 171 251 0774.)

Practical Sports Medicine (course)

3-10 October 1996; Club La Santa, Lanzarote (residential) Further details: Education Office, British Association of Sport and Medicine, c/o The

National Sports Medicine Institute, Medical College of St Bartholomew's Hospital, Charterhouse Square, London EC1M 6BQ. (Tel +44 (0)171 253 3244; fax +44 (0)171 251 0774.)

Fifteenth Congress of Sports Medicine of the AZ Sint-Jan

11-12 October 1996; Belfry Halls, Brugge, Belgium Further details: J Gabriels, Revalidatiecentrum AZ St-Jan Ruddershove 10, B-8000 Brugge. (Tel +32(0)50 45 22 30; fax +32(0) 50 45 29 17.)

BASM National Congress

31 October- 3 November 1996; Slieve Donard Hotel, Newcastle, County Down, Northern Ireland Further details: Education Office, British Association of Sport and Medicine, c/o The National Sports Medicine Institute Medical College of St Bartholomew's Hospital, Char-

terhouse Square, London EC1M 6BQ. (Tel +44 (0)171 253 3244 fax +44 (0)171 251 0774.)

Intermediate Course: Sports Specific Injury Management and Normal Examination of Joints

17-22 November 1996; Lilleshall Hall National Sports Centre, Shropshire (residential) Further details: Education Office, British Association of Sport and Medicine, c/o The National Sports Medicine Institute, Medical College of St Bartholomew's Hospital, Charterhouse Square, London EC1M 6BQ. (Tel +44 (0)171 253 3244; fax +44 (0) 171 251 0774.)

World Congress of Sports and Locomotor Medicine

27-29 December 1996; Colombo, Sri Lanka Sponsored by the Sri Lankan Government Ministry of Youth Affairs, Sports and Rural Development in association with Medicina Alternativa. Further details: Administrative Secretariat, 28 International Buddhist Centre