LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Water jet skiing, a dangerous sport with inadequate policing!

Editor,—Water jet skiing is a popular international water sport. As yet there is no strict highway code to avoid accidents. We report two severe musculoskeletal injuries associated with this sport. A 22 year old man presented with backwards and downwards pointed locked arms following bilateral anteroinferior fracture-dislocation of the shoulder with an associated brachial plexus lesion after an injury sustained while water jet skiing. While racing, his 1100 cc engine vehicle was hit by another jet ski from behind. His trunk moved violently forwards and the front part of the vehicle, while his hands remained holding the handle bars. The momentum of the forward trunk movement forced the shoulders to dislocate anteriorly as the arms stayed behind. A 34 year old young man sustained right knee dislocation as his jet ski came into the shallows. As the vehicle was turning to the left, the right side came closer to the bottom of the water where the sand was firm, and the front part of the right knee came into contact with the sand. The knee was deformed, the tibial part of the joint being posteriorly displaced. There was no neurovascular injury. The joint was reduced immediately in theatre by a direct pull on the tibia. At a later stage, a complex reconstruction of the anterior and posterior cruciate ligaments and the lateral/posterolateral corner was performed by a knee specialist. The accidents described are serious, producing devastating musculoskeletal injury. Although vehicle insurance, licensing, and speed limit are checked by the club where the sport takes place, these cases raise suspicions about the efficiency of current measures and speed control. We recommend that the European police patrol should implement similar laws to those applied in other States.

Kings’ Mill Center, Sutton in Ashfield, Nottinghamshire, United Kingdom.


The Editor

Author’s reply

Editor,—Mr Godfrey has stated that “most reasonable scientists and doctors would agree that there cannot be 1000 elite junior athletes in the United Kingdom”. I refer to the paper of Sharma et al. I do not intend to victimise one research group, as I have seen many papers that “transgress” in this way. However, I have noticed that an earlier paper of Dr Sharma’s, published as the result of a presentation at the European College of Sports Medicine Conference, Manchester 1998, also used the term “elite” when referring to junior athletes. Perhaps those of us who act as reviewers are also guilty here and should take a greater stand in the future in this regard. I recognise that what constitutes “elite” could be debated interminably. The Chambers Dictionary defines elite as “...the pick or flower of anything”. There can be little debate that Olympic gold medalists are elite by this definition, but in a sporting context generally, the definition does tend to be less subject to clear distinction. By way of example, I cite the top 12 heavyweight rowers in the UK. The British Olympic Medical Centre regularly tests 70 national squad rowers, of whom these 12 are a part, in the centre’s laboratory at Northwick Park Hospital in Harrow. In collaboration with DeMontford University, Vo₂ max data for these 12 was “scaled”. In other words, it was recalculated raising it to a power function of the body mass such that physiological data could be “normalised” or rendered dimensionless. When successfully accomplished, this mathematical technique allows data for women to be compared with men, children with adults, and so on. When done with V o₂ max data, it allows the individuals with the highest aerobic power to be truly identified. The results of this recalculation showed that expressing body mass to the 0.67 exponent produced the most promising results in all cases, with the exception of the three Olympic gold medalists. This shows that even with 12 individuals who constitute a group that appears homogeneous (very similar ages, heights, body weights, training volume, and intensities for the last 10 years, and very similar competitive experience) there appears to be a “more elite” subpopulation. Put another way, the top population the three gold medallists are “outliers” on the normal distribution curve. So where does this leave us with respect to my criticism of the use of the term “elite”? In my view, it brings us full circle and simply reinforces the point that authors should not be using the term “elite” in the title of any paper, and should present their definition of the term “elite” should they choose to use it with reference to the population they have conducted research on.

These steps should return the power of judgement to the reader. After all, within science we are taught to criticise any scientific study and constantly assess its value in the context of the existing body of knowledge. Of course, authors’ opinions are often important and valid, but should not be stated as anything other than opinions where they cannot be supported by science.

RICHARD GODFREY
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The genetics of physical fitness

HUGH MONTGOMERY
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Performance enhancing drugs; damned if you do, and damned if you don’t

Editor,—I recently attended the BASM Annual Conference, and was interested by the obviously conflicting views on and attitudes towards performance enhancing drugs highlighted during the discussions. The divergence of opinion was extreme. In the blue corner was the “ban em and string em up” brigade and in the red corner the “lets forget about them and legalise them all” (well not quite so extreme).

The facts surrounding performance enhancing drugs remain.

• Athletes and recreational sportspeople use them, almost certainly, more than we imagine: as many as 2.8% of Canadian school children test positive for anabolic steroids.

• Unsupervised drug use increases the risks to the users immensely—for example, adverse effects, risk of infection.

• Drug testing fails to identify the users of many of these drugs, because of clever dosage regimens, known adulterating mechanisms, and probably a less than total commitment to detect high profile users.

• Harm minimisation can reduce the use of these drugs, remove the more toxic drugs from the user’s repertoire, and monitor users medically to ensure that they are advised when detectable harm is observed. There is a duty of care to these users that is clearly stated by the General Medical Council (GMC): “it is . . . unethical for a doctor to withhold treatment from any patient on the basis of a moral judgement that the patient’s activities or lifestyle might have contributed to the condition for which treatment is being sought. Unethical behaviour of this kind may raise the question of serious professional misconduct.” In the same document it is stated, “ . . . all problem drug misusers—irrespective of age, gender, race, and drug of choice—must have proper access to support from appropriate services—including primary care . . .”

There needs to be a frank and open debate about these issues. It simply is not enough to say that this is banned so we can’t address the issue.

The GMC is to include the following statement in the next edition of Good Medical Practice, 2000: “Doctors who prescribe, or collude in the provision of drugs or treatment, with the intention of improperly enhancing performance in sport, would be contravening GMC guidelines and such actions would usually raise a question about a doctor’s continued registration.”

So “de-registered” if you do, and facing serious professional misconduct if you don’t. This knee jerk reaction to the words “sport and drugs” will undoubtedly lead to a retraction from the GMC, as surely as the lawyers would growl on any legal definition of the word “collude”.

The debate must move on. We must know how to monitor people using such drugs, we must be able to know how to reduce the use of the most harmful drugs, and we must recognise that even the government knows that “just say no” never works.

The Council of the British Association of Sports Medicine proposed to the GMC that it “… is of the opinion that doctors found intentionally involved in helping athletes and others to commit a doping offence, as defined by the IOC, are guilty of professional misconduct.”

This is a step on the road of a rational policy towards this problem, but sports doctors and general practitioners need to learn more about this problem, not so that we can grow fat by association with the ultimate striving for success, nor in collecting fees for this information, but simply to improve the care we give to patients.

Their obvious similarities to other drugs of abuse mean that there is a lot of information readily available and some of that is relevant to this select group of drug abusers. We do not have to invent the wheel, merely modify it.

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Notes and news

BJSM and JAMA


Current concepts

The first advanced sports medicine meeting entitled “Current Concepts” took place recently at the National Watersport Centre at Holme Pierpoint in Nottingham. It was organised by Mark Batt, attended by 55 delegates from Great Britain and Ireland, and judged by those present to have been a great success. Speakers included Dr Mark Batt, Professor Don Detmer, Mr Graham Holloway, Mr Mike Allen, Mr Dylan Morrissey, Mr Nat Padhiar and Mr Mike Barnes, but perhaps the greatest benefits were gained from the extended interactive discussion periods. The case presentations were excellent and are likely to be extended in future programmes. The next meeting in this series of events, coordinated by Brian English, is scheduled for 19 May 2000 in Loughborough. A further meeting on tendonopathies, coordinated by Cathy Speed, is scheduled for 8 December in Cambridge. All details are available from Barry Hill at the National Sports Medicine Institute.
Exercise and sport: the pros and cons for health

Benefits and Hazards of Exercise is a new publication from BMJ Books. Each chapter began life as a review article published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine and was updated by the authors before selection for this compendium. The contents of this book attracted considerable interest when they were first published in the journal, particularly among those readers who work in primary care and exercise professionals. As a result, in a collaborative effort between the BMJ Publishing Group and the Royal College of General Practitioners, a one day meeting on the benefits and hazards of exercise will be held on 15 June 2000 at the Chelsea Village Conference Centre. This conference will be open to health professionals and all those involved in the exercise industry, and will bring together a selection of international experts who will discuss the latest evidence on the beneficial effects of exercise and, more importantly, how these recommendations can be put into practice. For further details, please contact Jennifer Goulding at the Royal College of General Practitioners (tel: 0207 589 3232; fax: 0207 589 1428; email: j.goulding@rcgp.org.uk).

Commonwealth Games Federation report

The Journal recently received details of the report of the Honorary Medical Adviser to the Commonwealth Games Federation, following the games in Kuala Lumpur. From August 31 to September 24 there were 3100 village medical centre and 17 people required hospital treatment. There were 859 physiotherapy visits. There were 1362 medical encounters at the 16 sporting venues. The greatest number of these (573) took place at Langawi, the shooting venue. Interestingly there were only 19 heat related problems overall. There were three reported cases of Dengue fever, and, of 640 athletes who were first published in the journal, particularly among those readers who work in primary care and exercise professionals. As a result, in a collaborative effort between the BMJ Publishing Group and the Royal College of General Practitioners, a one day meeting on the benefits and hazards of exercise will be held on 15 June 2000 at the Chelsea Village Conference Centre. This conference will be open to health professionals and all those involved in the exercise industry, and will bring together a selection of international experts who will discuss the latest evidence on the beneficial effects of exercise and, more importantly, how these recommendations can be put into practice. For further details, please contact Jennifer Goulding at the Royal College of General Practitioners (tel: 0207 589 3232; fax: 0207 589 1428; email: j.goulding@rcgp.org.uk).

Marathon Medicine 2000

The Royal Society of Medicine will host a conference entitled Marathon Medicine 2000 on 13–15 April 2000. This major conference will discuss the most important aspects of endurance sport and the programme brings together many of the most renowned experts across the globe. Among those speaking are Sir Roger Bannister, Professor Claude Bouchar, Dr Randy Eichner, Dr Lawrence Folinisbee, Professor William Morgan, Dr Bente Pederson, Professor Peter Raven, Dr William Roberts, Professor Bengt Saltin, and Drs Peter Snijders and Gunnar Wranne. The programme is managed by Hugo Keeling and Peter Seligman. This conference will be open to health professionals and all those involved in the exercise industry, and will bring together a selection of international experts who will discuss the latest evidence on the beneficial effects of exercise and, more importantly, how these recommendations can be put into practice. For further details, please contact Jennifer Goulding at the Royal College of General Practitioners (tel: 0207 589 3232; fax: 0207 589 1428; email: j.goulding@rcgp.org.uk).

BASEM annual conference

Aircast are continuing their support of the BASEM Annual Congress. They will be sponsoring one of the major speakers, Professor Norbert Baehl, and our award prize. Researchers are advised to begin thinking about their projects for submission for the 2000 Aircast prize which was awarded to Nick Peirc 1998 and to Nicola Malfulli in 1999. This is a very valuable travelling fellowship which will allow the winner to attend the research centre of their choice. Attention is also drawn to other opportunities for international travel. The Sports Council offer bursaries for members to attend sports medicine events abroad and, in the past, members have been funded to attend the American College Sports Medicine meeting and other European events. If there are more applications than bursaries, the grants will be allocated on merit and numbers of bursaries per centre. If you wish to display your continuing professional development to ensure good medical practice. At present the NSMI–BASEM educational partnership is the major provider in sport medicine education in the UK and will be pivotal in all future developments.

BASEM education

A major meeting of BASEM education took place on 29 February to discuss plans to develop the education programme. With increasing interest in sport and exercise medicine these courses have become very popular and are often oversubscribed. Barry Hill is updating the list of tutors for BASEM courses. If you wish to become involved in BASEM education or you have heard a lecturer whom you would like to nominate, please contact Barry Hill at NSMI.

BASEM Scotland

BASEM Scotland has been busy over the last few months with a number of important events. As part of their continuing medical education programme there were two outstanding evening meetings. The first was presented by Professor Susan Ward, Director of the Centre for Exercise, Sports Medicine And Science (CESAME) on respiratory physiology, and the second by Dr John Shaw Dunn of the Anatomy Dept at Glasgow Uni-
Doctors and doping

The General Medical Council have responded to the request by BASEM for clarification of their recent statement on doctors and doping, after the issue was raised by the British Olympic Association at the BASEM annual general meeting. The full statement is published below. Members of BASEM are opposed to drug abuse in sport and the GMC statement endorses the position of the medical profession with regard to the deliberate use of prohibited performance enhancing drugs.

GMC STATEMENT

“Doctors who prescribe or collude in the provision of drugs or treatment with the intention of improperly enhancing an individual's performance in sport would be contravening the GMC's guidance, and such actions would usually raise a question of a doctor's continued registration. This does not preclude the provision of any care or treatment where the doctor's intention is to protect or improve the patient's health.”

Sport and Exercise Medicine and Science Council

The National Sports Medicine Institute, in their newly reconstituted format, arranged a meeting of their Sport and Exercise Medicine and Science Council on 1 March at the European Fitness Convention at Olympia. The meeting was addressed by Professor Angus Wallace, chairman of NSMI, who outlined the future direction of NSMI, and proposed an annual UK Congress for Sports and Exercise Medicine and Science in 2003. It is also proposed to have a major sport and exercise medicine conference at the Commonwealth Games in 2002.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

British Association of Sport and Medicine Scotland: The upper limb and beyond
5–7 May 2000; Aviemore, Scotland
Topics include:
● Upper limb imaging
● Orthopaedic management and rehabilitation of hand and wrist injuries
● Pool based training
Further details: Miss Nicky Walker. Tel: 0131 650 2578. Email: nicky.walker@ed.ac.uk

Pre-Hospital Emergency Care course
5–7 May 2000; Preston, UK
19–21 June 2000; Cambridge, UK
Run jointly by BASICS and the Royal College of Surgeons, this course is open to anyone who may have to deal with emergency situations. The course leads to a certificate in Pre-Hospital Care.
Further details: Basics Education Ltd, 7 Black Horse Lane, Ipswich IP1 2EP. Tel: 01473 218 407. Fax: 01473 280585. Email: educ@basics.org.uk

3rd International sports sciences congress
11–13 May 2000; Istanbul, Turkey
The main topics will include:
● Teaching physical education and sports
● Training and movement
● Sports health
● Sport management
● Psychosocial areas in sport.
Further details: Kongre Sekreterligi, Marmara Universitesi, Beden Egitimi ve Spor Yüksel-koku, Cumu Yolu Cad 81616 Anka-dulluhsari, Istanbul, Turkey. Tel: +90 (216) 308 56 61/62/63. Fax: +90 (216) 332 16 20. Email: kongre2000@marun.edu.tr

Healthcare workers: their health risks and how to minimise them
25–26 May 2000; London, UK
Further details: Rosamund Snow, External Relations Department, Royal Society of Medicine, 1 Wimpole St, London W1M 8AE. Fax: 0171 290 2904. Email: rosamund.snow@roysocmed.ac.uk

International conference on sport technology: challenges for the 21st century
4–6 June 2000; Calgary, Canada
Further details: The Sport Technology Research Centre, Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive NW, Calgary AB, T2N 1N4, Canada. Tel: (403) 220 3377. Email: istconf@ucalgary.ca

Exercise and sport: the pros and cons for health
15 June 2000; London, UK
Further details: Jennifer Goulding, Courses and Conferences Organiser, Royal College of General Practitioners, 14 Princes Gate, Hyde Park, London SW7 1PU. Tel: 0207 581 3232. Fax: 0207 589 1428

National Athletic Trainers’ Association 51st Annual Meeting
28 June–2 July 2000; Nashville, Tennessee, USA
Further details: NATA, PO Box 911758, Dallas, TX 75391-1578, USA. Tel: (301) 694 5243. Fax: (301) 694 5124. Website: www.nata.org

Rehabilitation and rheumatology 2000: unlocking the door of disability
29 June–1 July 2000; Bath, UK
Topics will include:
● Paediatric rheumatology and rehabilitation
● Pain management
● Spinal injuries
● Neuro-rehabilitation.
Further details: Janet Crompton. Tel: 01453 549929. Fax: 01453 548919. Email: janetcrompton@compuserve.com

5th Annual congress of the European College of Sport Science
19–23 July 2000; Jyväskylä, Finland
Details from: ECSS, University of Jyväskylä, PO Box 35, FIN-40351, Jyväskylä, Finland. Tel: +358 14 603160. Fax: +358 14 603161. Email: ecss@pallo.jyu.fi Website: www.dhs-koeln.de/ecss

1st Latin American meeting in orthopaedic sports medicine
26–29 July 2000; Santiago, Chile
Details from: Chilean Soc Sp Med, Av. Las Condes 9792 Officine, 206 Santiago, Chile. Email: info@sochmedep.cl Website: www.sochmedep.cl

British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences Annual Conference
29 August–1 September 2000; Liverpool, UK
Further details: BASES 2000, Event Management Services, Egerton Court, 2 Rodney St, Liverpool L3 9UX. Tel: 0151 231 3585. Fax: 0151 709 5057. Email: ems@livjm.ac.uk

2000 Pre-olympic scientific congress
7–13 September 2000; Brisbane, Australia
Themes running through the programme include:
● Role of the Olympic Games in promoting health for all
● Impact of elite athlete sports medicine on the general community
Deadline for abstracts August 1999.
Further details: Congress Manager, Sports Medicine Australia, PO Box 897, Belconnen Act 2616, Australia. Tel: +61 2 6251 6944. Fax: +61 2 6253 1489. Email: smanat@sma.org.au

19th congress of sports medicine
13–14 October 2000; Bruges, Belgium
Topics include:
● Sports physiotherapy
● Children and sports
Further details: Dr Michel D’Hooghe, President Brucosport, Hospital AZ Sint-Jan, Ruddershove 10, B-8000 Brugge, Belgium. Tel: +32 50 452230. Fax: +32 50 452231. Email: brucosport@azbrugge.be Website: http://user.online.be/brucosport/index.htm

1st Moscow International Forum: Sport medicine science and practice on the eve of the 21st century
20–25 October 2000; Moscow
Further details: Organising Committee of the Forum, Yachshuk AM, Zemlyanoi Val 53, Moscow. Tel: +7 928 29 92

British Association of Sport and Exercise Medicine congress
3–5 November 2000; Tewkesbury, UK
Lectures include:
● Muscular conditioning during space station MIR flight
● Health enhancing physical activity—an upgrowing challenge for sports medicine
Further details: Dr Clive Monkyld, Ridgeway House, Ridgeway Cross, Bradley, Worcestershire WR13 5JJ. Tel/Fax: 01886 880158

Multiple choice questions—answers
p 93: Pescatello S, VanHeest JL, Physical activity mediates a healthier body weight in the presence of obesity

1 (b); 2 (e); 3 (e); 4 (c); 5 (b).