

Female athlete health: bridging the data gap

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We are delighted to present the annual Norwegian Sports and Exercise Medicine Society issue of the *BJSM*. Norway has a rich history of valuing women and girls' rights in society. In this issue, we are proudly focusing on the health of female athletes in order to bring new insights on bridging the data gap in this area. Our cover features Norwegian alpine skier, Ragnhild Mowinckel, who is a two-time Olympic silver medallist and two-time World Championship bronze medallist. Her inspiring comeback after severe injuries makes her a perfect representative for this issue.

We begin by highlighting the supplement to the International Olympic Committee consensus statement on methods for recording and reporting epidemiological data on injury and illness in sport, which specifically addresses female athlete health. This consensus statement identifies 10 domains that are relevant to female athletes throughout their lives. We hope that this consensus will contribute to improving the research and well-being of female athletes. (See page 1164) One example of a female athlete-specific topic is injury related to the female breast. This is also discussed in the editorial titled 'Tackling breast issues in contact sports' which provides suggestions on how to address this issue. (See page 1160) Another important topic related to female health is the use of oral contraceptives. A systematic review in this issue concludes that it is premature and inappropriate to recommend or prescribe combined hormonal contraceptives for the purpose of protecting against musculoskeletal injuries. (See page 1195) Original research, we want to highlight, also examines the increased risk of atrial fibrillation among elite female endurance athletes compared with the general population. (See page 1175).

The second major focus of this issue is mental health among athletes and in society. A comprehensive systematic review concludes that physical activity is highly

beneficial for improving symptoms of depression, anxiety and distress in various adult populations, including those with diagnosed mental health disorders and chronic diseases. (See page 1203) Therefore, physical activity should be considered a fundamental approach to managing depression, anxiety and psychological distress. In line with the emphasis on both injury prevention and mental health, an original research study in this issue suggests that athletes should complete the full Sport Mental Health Assessment Tool V.1 prior to participation. (See page 1187).

The final topic is resistance training. We have included an editorial that highlights the effectiveness of most resistance training programmes in improving muscle strength. The take-home message is 'just start and maintain regular training'. (See page 1161) However, long-term adherence is crucial for achieving optimal functional and health benefits. Another editorial discusses a socio-ecological approach to enhance adherence to strength training, with an emphasis on establishing good habits from a young age. It presents strategies to increase participation rates in strength training. (See page 1162) The final article we would like to present is a randomised trial that found no additional effect of exercises or injections compared with simple advice and a heel cup for plantar fasciopathy. (See page 1180).

In Norway, our annual Sport and Exercise Medicine conference was transitioned to a digital format during the COVID-19 pandemic. We organise a hybrid conference, with an in-person event scheduled in Trondheim from 3 November to 5 November. Although this year's conference is primarily conducted in Norwegian, we hope that the programme will be of interest to our Nordic colleagues. In line with the current issue of *BJSM*, a key theme is female athlete health. We have a symposium titled 'Train women as women', which includes presentations on the impact of the menstrual cycle on endurance performance, the biological development of female athletes and a lecture on how Marit Bjørgen, the holder of the all-time record for winter Olympic gold medals, trained during different periods of her career.

Finally, we are pleased to announce that registration for the Fifth World Congress of Sports Physical Therapy (#WCSPT24) is now open. The congress will take



place in the heart of Oslo on 14–15 June 2024. The theme of #WCSPT24 is 'From Research to Clinical Practice', and we look forward to welcoming colleagues from around the world to Oslo for knowledge sharing, best practices, networking and enjoyable experiences. The organising committee is working hard on finalising an exciting schedule with interesting lectures and engaging workshops. The homepage (<https://www.wcspt.org>) is all the essential information you need.

We hope to see you all in Oslo in June 2024.

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