



Position Statement on the Importance of Sport and Exercise Medicine for a Country

Sport and Exercise Medicine is a multidisciplinary clinical and academic speciality of medicine dealing with health promotion for the general population. The sport medicine physician achieves this by encouraging a physically active lifestyle with diagnosis, treatment, prevention and rehabilitation following injuries or illnesses from participation in physical activities, exercises and sport at all levels. Sports medicine is globally defined and recognised not solely for taking care of the sporting elite athletes. It is mainly focused on:

- Prevention of the greatest epidemic of the 21st century, chronic diseases caused by sedentary lifestyle as a major area of increasing interest which can partially be served by expertise in sports medicine. Exercise is medication! Exercise is the forgotten prescription
- Pre-participation clinical screening and examination before exercise and competition to especially prevent sudden cardiac death in sport
- The use of supplements, pharmacological agents, doping control and gender verification and its complex moral, legal and health-related difficulties
- Special medical issues associated with international sporting events of athletes, including disabled athletes, such as the effects of travel, sleep and acclimatization, as well as medical assistance to the athletes engaged in all sports with asthma, diabetes and other chronic illnesses
- Research in basic science and extensive clinical research in the sports medicine domains within a great variety of specialities.

There is a strong relationship between exercise and health. Exercise is essential to good health and quality of life. Physical activity and exercise exerts a positive influence on muscular-skeletal, cardiovascular, respiratory, hormonal-immunological, hematological, neuro-sensory and gastrointestinal systems.

Physical activity levels are declining in most developed countries and in all age categories. Physical activity should not be mistaken with exercise. Exercise is a subcategory of physical activity that is planned, structured, repetitive, and purposeful in the sense that the improvement or maintenance of one or more components of physical fitness is the objective. Physical activity includes exercise as well as other activities which involve bodily movement and are done as part of playing, working, active transportation, house chores and recreational activities.

Regular physical activity and sport, especially during childhood and adolescence, promotes proper growth and development, maintains health and counteracts negative risk factors such as cigarette smoking, obesity, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, hypertension, coronary heart disease and other ailments. Worldwide, physical inactivity is estimated to be the primary cause of approximately 21-25% of breast and colon cancers, 27% of diabetes and approximately 30% of ischaemic heart disease.

Risk factor profiles for many ailments limiting the quality of life are beneficially affected by physical activity and exercise. The Sports Medicine specialist and other parties involved in this work may have a substantial impact on all the above points raised including reduction of health care costs.

The increased attention from media and significant financial and political interactions in international sports events creates an atmosphere where business and sports meet, not always for the benefit of involved athletes. Consequently, sports medicine can encompass an array of areas including internal medicine, exercise physiology, cardiology, orthopaedics and traumatology, physical and rehabilitation medicine and psychology.

Sports medicine is a multidisciplinary specialty, integrating teams with physicians, athletic trainers, physical therapists, coaches, sport scientists, nutritionists, psychologists, athletes and other related specialties. Besides his clinical expertise, the sports medicine specialist should be considered as head of the multidisciplinary sports medicine team, coordinating the direct planning of the athlete's physical condition, related to his health.

Plato, the father of medicine, said in the 4th century BC: "In order for man to succeed in life, God provided him with two means, Education and Physical Activity. Not separately, one for the soul and the other for the body but for the two together. With these two means, men can attain perfection".

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