

Conclusions of the “Avilés” Working Group on Sports Medicine

XI Conference. Barcelona, October 2022

The conference was organised by the Department of Sport and Health of the Spanish Commission for Anti-doping in Sport (CELAD) and by the *Secretaria General de l'Esport i l'Activitat Física* (SGEAF - Catalan General Secretariat of Sport and Physical Activity) through the CAR (High Performance Centre) of Sant Cugat and the *Consell Català de l'Esport* (Catalan Council of Sport). The conference was held at the High Performance Centre of Sant Cugat and at the Colet Museum of Barcelona.

CONCLUSIONS:

- Insistence on the importance of a medical examination prior to sports participation, directed at preventing Sudden Death. A sport-medical check-up that includes anamnesis, physical exam and ECG is essential as a starting point. The performance of more specific tests such as an echocardiogram or effort tests would be recommended as complementary for athletes aged over 14 or 15 years or for a suspected cardiac pathology.
- “Extreme” endurance exercise, continued for many years, can cause changes in the cardiac structure and function and create an arrhythmic substrate. For this reason, and particularly for athletes practising sports of this type, it is important and necessary to carry out regular heart examinations.
- The myocarditis rate due to SARS Cov-2 is low and, in general, mild. Following vaccination, the rate is even lower, affecting the 18 to 25- year age band. The practice of sport is not recommended during infection. However, the prescription and practice of sport is in fact a great help in the post-COVID patient recovery process.
- With regard to infection from SARS Cov-2, no increase in sudden death in sport has been observed.
- The performance of effort tests must be standardised, according to the criterion of the sports medicine specialist, although it is important to maintain the use of face masks by healthcare personnel in all cases and to conduct the tests in places that are well-ventilated and with good air renewal. In the case of a symptomatic athlete, a prior diagnostic test must be made.
- Attention is drawn to the importance of prevention in sport in general and in high-level sport in particular. It is worthy of note that athletes cannot achieve a high performance if they are not healthy.
- There is a need to advance in the prescription of physical exercise for mental health. Given that physical activity modulates neuroplasticity and stimulates therapeutic adherence, its use is recommended in the treatment of mental health disorders, with an individualised prescription for each patient.
- It is important to take account of the studies and contributions being made in our society on sexual and gender diversity, sport and its implications.
- Sports medicine units should be linked to the hospital departments together with the rest of the medical specialties due to the added value they bring to the healthcare of our athletes, whatever their level, and any doing physical exercise in general, as well as their usefulness as a preventive and therapeutic tool for the different pathologies.
- In Spain, the current lack of training of sports medicine physicians has resulted in a serious shortage of these specialists and this will continue to worsen in the forthcoming years if a MIR (Resident Medical Intern) training system in this specialty is not approved in the near future.
- This shortage is having a considerable impact on the entire sports system, on the health of the athletes in general, and on high-level athletes in particular. A country with important international sports results cannot afford to part with these professionals who are making a substantial contribution to the healthcare of our athletes and to the improvement of their performance. Likewise, the training of Sports Physicians is the specialist benchmark for an active and healthy society with safe sports practices.
- Yet again the “Avilés” Working Group would urge the Ministry of Health to approve, as a matter of priority and urgency, the training of Sports Medicine Physicians.

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