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Is There a Trend Toward Chiropractic in Sports Care

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Abstract

A literature review on the effects of chiropractic and sports care revealed a complex role for doctors who treat athletes at every level. We discuss different research papers presented and the interrelationships of care and the results. We feel that more research at every level of sports care needs to be pursued for the betterment of chiropractic and the athletes we treat.

Introduction

The determination of chiropractic's role in sports care revolves around the ability of the doctor to show progress in areas important to the athlete.¹ Chiropractic is not only beneficial to the experienced and professional athlete, but is beneficial to the amateur and weekend athlete as well. The practitioner's role is to enhance performance, and prevent and manage injury.^{1,2} The treatment of professional athletes has helped the chiropractor to apply his knowledge of biomechanical injuries and their treatment.³

Chiropractors have found that they can also be effective in the nutritional aspects of athletic performance. They have been able to help in precompetition preparation, competition endurance, and all aspects of injury prevention and treatment.⁴

Discussion

Chiropractic is becoming more a treatment of choice by professional and amateur athletes. This has been evident in the treatment of collegiate, Olympic, and professional athletes and has enabled us to gain recognition.⁵ Chiropractic care is not only limited to the more advanced athlete, but young athletes are able to benefit from chiropractic treatment as well. This is especially true in the areas of critical, acute, and emergency care.²

Due to the lack of education in the areas of biomechanical and neuromusculoskeletal dysfunction, medical doctors are not as well prepared to deal with athletic injuries. Because of this, many athletes of varying abilities are learning of the benefits of chiropractic care. An excellent example of a medical professional giving advice to professional players about chiropractic can be found in the San Francisco 49ers. Some of the players personal doctors are quoted as saying, "It's the worst thing for you," and "If he (their chiropractor) hasn't hurt you already, he will hurt you."⁶ Many high-performance athletes and their coaches have found that sports chiropractic plays a major role in three important areas of prime concern to all athletes: maximum musculoskeletal performance, prevention of injury, and management of injury.^{1,2}

Weekend and amateur athletes can learn about the importance of chiropractic adjustments from many professional athletes. No matter which sport you enjoy on your day off, you can find someone you admire in your area of interest that is being treated by a chiropractor. The list of advocates is long. Boxing heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield; Joe Montana, Jerry Rice, and Roger Craig of the four time Super Bowl champions San Francisco 49ers in football; Chi Chi Rodriguez in golf; world champion kick-boxer Dennis Alexio; as well as champions in virtually every major sport are becoming regular chiropractic patients. Many of these athletes insist on being adjusted by their chiropractors just prior to competition.³ They feel they are not able to perform at their optimum ability without the reassurance that they have full range of motion without restriction in their joints.⁷

The changing outlook towards health from an allopathic standpoint to a more holistic approach has brought the study of nutrition to a more respectable position. The athlete is always looking to enhance performance, speed, injury rehabilitation, and increase endurance. In their search they are being drawn to the benefits of nutrition. Inadequate nutrition and unhealthy nutritional behavior is clearly linked to the etiology of practically every major chronic disease.⁸ Chiropractors qualified in the field of nutrition are able to give pertinent advice on vitamin supplementation, dietary intakes, environmental toxicities, homeostasis, and biomechanical reactions of bodily systems.⁴

In an effort to reduce injuries entire teams as well as individual athletes are looking toward chiropractic to design tailored conditioning programs. They are finding that chiropractors, as trained professionals in the area of biomechanical function of the neuromusculoskeletal system, are better able to prepare a complete conditioning and injury prevention program.⁹

It is necessary to properly assess and identify the biomechanics of an injury prior to the initiation of a goal-oriented treatment program of the involved area.

The soft tissue involvement of an injury must be evaluated and included in the treatment program. Many problems are found to be initiated at the precompetition level, due to poor conditioning, poor fitness or poor posture. Evaluation procedures use not only traditional orthopedic tests, neurological examinations, and x-ray studies, but have come to include more extensive outside professional diagnostic procedures. These may include CAT scans, MRIs, joint angiograms, diskograms, and joint arthroscopic procedures.¹⁰

Conclusion

The trend towards chiropractic in sports care has been shown to be valid. It is hoped that more definitive studies in the area of nutrition, biomechanics, and injury rehabilitation will be done to heighten chiropractic in the sports care arena. Because of the increasing world-wide interest in sports and fitness, no matter what your age or level of athletic achievement, the opportunity to finally see the role of chiropractic in sports care is at hand.

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