

Sports Medicine: The Bigger Picture

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When we initiated the plan for this special issue in October 2019, fall sports were in full swing. Our professional lives were packed with our clinical sports medicine practices and our sideline and training room work for the high school, collegiate, and professional teams we cover. How things have changed in the past year...

Since March 2020, COVID-19 has completely redefined our professional and personal lives more than any event in our lifetimes. Spring sports were abruptly ceased, and schools moved to online education. Our practices have scrambled to care for patients through telehealth visits. There are few aspects of our professional lives that have not been impacted.

Historically, in times of despair, tumult and crisis, this country has looked to sports to inspire, distract, harmonize and connect us. Bob Costas stated, "The best thing about sports is the sense of community and shared emotion it can create." In these difficult and challenging times, we have deeply felt the absence of sports and the positive effects it has on our lives. Yet the loss of human life due to this illness has also brought reckoning with the sometimes oversized role sports plays in our community and suspending athletics seems like a small sacrifice in the face of the mortality and morbidity witnessed.

For many, the question remains, "When will sports return?" And how can we return to sports in a way that protects our athletes, as well as team staff, families and spectators? Will the incidence and type of injuries be influenced

by the deconditioning athletes may have experienced during this shutdown or by the way athletes are reintroduced to training or competition? How will our responsibilities and scope of care for athletes change as it pertains to COVID-19 prevention? For those in the sports medicine field, these are just some of the unanswered questions we face.

While the current pandemic has had an overwhelming impact on sports medicine, the downstream effects of this contagion and our response will be studied for years to come. For the current issue, we have assembled an esteemed group of sports medicine experts to produce a collection of (non-COVID) topics relevant to the care of athletes. We hope that as athletes are able to return to their fields, this issue will help us provide optimal care. We have also provided a brief summary on the state of sports participation during this pandemic, though the situation may change much by the time this issue is published. While there is much uncertainty about the return of sports, we may all have a renewed appreciation for the positives they impart to society.

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