

Steroids -- Another Perspective

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We have all read and heard many things about steroids during the time following the Seoul Olympics. What does this mean to us as chiropractors and especially to those of us who come in contact with athletes as part of our daily practice? There are some DCs who don't pay much attention to steroids since, as DCs, we can't dispense drugs anyway. I do want to remind you though that you will probably come across it either by accident or by being thorough in an evaluation of a patient. You may even make the observation that your patient is able to heal much more quickly than you even anticipated. You may make the observation that your athlete is experiencing growth, strength, and speed improvements that are truly noticeable, even though the coach, parent, or others are only marveling at these newly acquired traits. You may begin to also notice a change in behavior and an aggressiveness that is exceeding acceptable limits.

If you were an athlete and had the opportunity to get bigger, stronger, faster, and notice your virility increase quicker than the competition's, why wouldn't you want to take vitamins? Most young athletes in their teens and 20s are more than willing to try almost anything that their competition is utilizing. Even warnings about side effects that will display themselves in years to come, don't pose much of a deterrent to a young person who is healthier and stronger than 99 percent of the population. Basically, when you are in your 20s it is pretty difficult to visualize a potential side effect in your 40s. Not many of us possess that intuitiveness. When the Olympic athletes were polled last year concerning the question of whether to take steroids or not, over 55 percent said they would maintain their competitiveness. The problem is not going to disappear because athletes will always be athletes. And as long as it is not regulated there will always be a black market. Therefore, a concern that has potentially long-lasting health ramifications for young people that aren't capable of making futuristic health decisions is a responsibility of the chiropractor. This, I believe, is another one of those exercises in true health care delivery that doesn't have license privilege. Education and prevention seems to be an approach that DCs can become involved in. The feeling of being an instrumental factor in the development of young athletes is very rewarding.

As chiropractors, we can take pride in the fact that we have never advocated drugs to supplement performance or give the feeling of false health, but in turn have been promoting chiropractic health care for athletes as safe, effective, and in the long run definitely the most health conscious. Athletes who experience chiropractic care during their athletic pursuits don't have potentially life-threatening side effects to show for it.

The chiropractic community is currently trying to educate the public so they should be aware that having a chiropractor as part of their sports medicine team is one of the best and hopefully -- first things they should do.

JANUARY 1990