ARRHYTHMIAS AND SUDDEN DEATH IN ATHLETES

Developments in Cardiovascular Medicine

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Arrhythmias and Sudden Death in Athletes

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FOREWORD

Cardiovascular diseases are the most important causes of death in the world today. In adults, the most frequent heart disease is acute myocardial infarction, which can lead to sudden death. To prevent these diseases we need to fight against their main risk factors, which include smoking, lipid disorders, hypertension, diabetes and a sedentary life-style, among others.

It has been demonstrated that physical exercise or sports at any age provide notable benefits and can help to decrease other risk factors and reduce the incidence of cardiovascular diseases. Exercise can be simply walking or cycling. Aerobic exercise contributes to weight loss and also helps to control blood pressure, cholesterol and diabetes. It therefore plays an important role in prevention of heart diseases.

Sports for young people are of great value and advisable not only because they contribute to physical fitness but also because they help in psychological well-being. Young people should be encouraged to include general exercise, and particularly sports, into their daily activities.

The following points however, should be kept in mind:

1. Although winning at a sport is important, this is only so if it is achieved in natural physical conditions and with the correct training. Therefore, it is advisable to keep well away from any type of activity which artificially increases physical performance, that is, drug taking.

2. Sportsmen and women should undergo regular health check-ups, especially from a cardiovascular viewpoint, so as to rule out the danger of presenting severe complications, particularly the rare but dramatic occurrence of sudden death.

This book, edited by Drs. Antonio Bayés de Luna, Francesco Furlanello, Barry Maron and Douglas Zipes, describes the problems related to sudden death in athletes from a scientific viewpoint. Although I am no expert, I believe that this publication covers all aspects related to this subject and the extraordinary challenge it entails. Consequently, it may be particularly useful for physicians and other health care personnel working in the field of sports medicine, as it provides the necessary knowledge for determining when an athlete is at risk of presenting a severe cardiovascular disease, or even sudden death, and what should be done for their prevention.

I would like to congratulate the editors of this book for their excellent contribution to the field, the magnitude of which will allow athletes, both professional and amateur, to participate in sporting activities with a maximum guarantee for their cardiovascular health.

*Juan Antonio Samaranch
Marquis de Samaranch
President International Olympic Committee*

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