

SPORTS PHYSICIANS IN TRAINING

Around the world...

– Written by Milena Tomovic, Serbia

The final year of our sports medicine residency programme has, at last, started. Time is passing rapidly (as always), leaving little opportunity to absorb all the knowledge and experience available to us. Not only is this the final year of our specialisation, it is also an Olympic year, as well as the year we celebrate the 65th anniversary of the sports medicine specialisation in Serbia. One could say it is symbolic and historic at the same time.

Without further ado, let me introduce myself. My name is Dr. Milena Tomovic, I am a sports medicine resident at the School of Medicine, University of Belgrade, Serbia and I would like to share my story with you.

Last October, my fellow residents and I started a two-semester programme of lectures as part of our sports medicine specialisation training. Our group has ten members, five are working at the Serbian Institute of Sports and Sports Medicine. This is the first time in many years that lectures have been held, making us very lucky indeed. In the past, the number of sports medicine residents has been too small to justify running the programme.

It has been enjoyable to be part of a study group again – it feels like being back at school and in some ways, it is. Unfortunately, colleagues from the Institute, including myself, have had to work through this two semester period. We come to work every day and at some point have to leave for lectures, rushing across the city to the university, 10 km away.

This adds an extra burden, making our lives much more complicated and stressful. Additionally, the impact of this being an Olympic year has resulted in a lot more work than usual for us at the Institute. To be more specific, we have been tasked with performing periodic medical exams for athletes at the Institute. In a well-organised, highly-equipped environment, athletes and members of the Serbian Olympic team require medical clearance to participate in competition. While on the one hand the Olympic year has brought extra work for us, creating a congested schedule, on the other hand, it has helped us residents to gain more experience in sports medicine. It has been challenging for us to focus on our every day jobs at the Institute and follow the lecture programme at the same time.



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Serbian Institute of Sport and Sports Medicine

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At this point, I would like to give you some details about the lecture programme. All the lectures are organised by the Sports Medicine Department at the Medical School of Belgrade, but several departments, such as Physiology, Cardiology, Physical Medicine, Orthopaedics etc. We also have professors from the Faculty of Sport and Physical Education, Belgrade University, giving lectures on sports science. Having the opportunity to attend these particular lectures has been of great value, because every sports medicine physician should know the basics of training, testing, sports performance and sports science. This is the only way to fully understand how athletes train and perform and how best to keep them healthy and uninjured. Furthermore, most of the professors from the Medical School taking part in this two-semester lecture programme have a sports background. Either they have played sport in the past or they have worked as team doctors. As I mentioned before, these lectures have not been held in many years due to a lack of students, so it is understandable that the whole programme was new for some of the professors; they have had to adapt their field of expertise to athletes and their medical needs. This has resulted in not all the lectures being of the same quality and we have faced a problem that seems very common in Euro-

pean sports medicine; even though the discipline has existed for 65 years in Serbia as an official programme at Belgrade Medical School, there are still differing opinions as to what it should consist of and exactly which skills a sports medicine physician should have. In my opinion, this varied approach, with the wide-ranging experience of our professors gives us a broad insight into the field and prepares us well for the multitude of clinical challenges that we will face as sports medicine physicians.

At the same time as my specialisation lectures, I started the IOC sports medicine diploma programme. This is a 2-year course organised by the International Olympic Committee consisting of online lectures, assignments and tests. It is a great honour to be one of the students enrolled in this programme, having the opportunity to learn from the best in sports medicine. The online nature of the course offers students the opportunity to manage their time and handle the lectures with freedom. The fact that professors are from all around the world (Canada, Qatar, New Zealand, Europe etc.)



Image: The Serbian Institute of Sport and Sports Medicine is located in Kosutnjak, a forest park in Belgrade. "Autumn in Kosutnjak" by Petkovic Boris, Creative Commons.

makes the whole experience unique. I have been astonished at the way they have shown me how to guide my thoughts, how to find and filter only the important and helpful information in this internet era, among an excessive amount of unnecessary data. In addition, it is important to mention that the injury prevention lectures in particular were very insightful and raised my awareness that something can – and must – be done concerning this issue. Last but not least, I have really enjoyed the lectures from New Zealand and Australia, countries so far away from mine with amazing experience in sports and sports medicine, especially in matters around athlete's travelling hazards.



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Finally, all the lectures we attend as residents are there to help us become good doctors and good professionals. We have the chance to acquire knowledge that is given to us unconditionally and unselfishly, while struggling to embrace all of it in a short time period of time. It is strange how it makes you accept that there is always more to read and more to learn, meanwhile it is crucial to be confident in your knowledge but at the same time to critically consider all the information you receive or provide. Furthermore, we realise that this is still the beginning of our professional careers and we have to stay focused, against the rhythm of our private life, as we are not medical students any more, able to devote all the time in the world to studying. In order to find balance you must push yourself to the limits, just as athletes do in their pursuit of success.

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