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ADAPTIVE SPORTS MEDICINE: UNIQUENESS AND CHALLENGES OF PROVIDING SPECIALTY CARE

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At one point in our lives we all played catch, kicked a ball, ran a race, or played in an organized sport. Sports are ingrained in our society and are part of being a human. Adaptive sports medicine includes the practice of disability medicine with sports medicine and incorporates the knowledge of the specific sports with their pattern of injuries and specialized equipment. In general, able body sports medicine works with healthy individuals who succumb to a temporary illness and/or acute injury. The athletes in this field tend to be in great physical condition with minimal underlying medical problems. Adaptive sports medicine athletes have significant underlying medical or traumatic conditions, and complications related to the individual disability. There are also unique injuries related to the adaptive and assistive equipment used in to compete.

All adaptive sports athletes have baseline medical status that defines their physical disability such as SCI, amputation, poly-trauma, and traumatic brain injury. Each condition is unique and requires understanding by the individual athlete as well the healthcare provider. For example, an athlete with a spinal cord injury would require special attention to the skin care below the level of injury, especially in tight fitting adaptive equipment and require periodic pressure releases in endurance sports events. Understanding SCI and the potential for skin complications along with equipment needs can prevent devastating pressure injuries leading to potentially prolonged recovery.

An example of the need for the understanding of unique complications of an underlying disability is autonomic dysreflexia. Autonomic dysreflexia (AD) is a medical emergency that occurs in patients with SCI above T6. It causes an imbalanced reflex sympathetic discharge, and if unrecognized, or left untreated, can lead to potentially life-threatening hypertension, seizures, pulmonary edema, myocardial infarction, cerebral hemorrhage and death.

Athletes involved in adaptive sports have conditions that can put them at higher risk than able body athletes. Many athletes with SCI have osteoporosis in their domain.

BIOGRAPHY

Kenneth Lee is manager and the Milwaukee Eagles are one of the nation's premier squads. Every year their Eagles host a home wheelchair lacrosse tournament at the Ozaukee Ice Center. Milwaukee Eagles is led by Kenneth Lee and Marquette University's lacrosse team.

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