

As we begin discussing plans for our college campuses re-opening and college sports restarting. A prudent plan must be developed to safely return student-athletes to intercollegiate athletics, given the extended time away from campus, unsupervised training sessions and, lack of training sessions due to the COVID-19 pandemic creates the potential for injury without to transition from inactivity to return to sport. Ideally the plans include collaboration with the sport coach, strength and conditioning specialist, athletic trainer and team physician with a focus on safety, illness and injury prevention first. The medical staff's unchallengeable authority must be emphasized and continued to be supported to ensure the maintenance of safety standards including acclimatization and injury reduction strategies. As detailed in the NCAA's Interassociation Recommendations – Preventing Catastrophic Injury and Death in Collegiate Athletes, conditioning and practice plans must be shared and reviewed by primary athletics health care providers. This pandemic has changed the landscape of collegiate athletics, and a failure to collaborate, plan and organize, in advance will lead to increased injury and preventable catastrophic outcomes.

Sports medicine and athletic training literature has produced some excellent resources over the past few years. There have been many cases of death from exertional heat stroke (EHS) that have been reviewed by many of the top individuals in the country as well as other cases related to EHS, Sudden Cardiac Death, Rhabdomyolysis and Exertional Sickling Collapse.

We must have a collaborative universal plan of appropriate conditioning and acclimatization of athletes prior to beginning sport specific conditioning programs to prevent senseless EHS cases. The literature states a time of 10 to 14 days for the body to be 80% acclimated to a specific part of the country (transition phase/acclimatization). The collaboration with physicians, athletic trainer's, strength & conditioning, and sport coaches is so important as it will benefit the health, safety, and wellness of the student-athlete.

Further, in the NCAA's Interassociation Recommendations- Preventing Catastrophic Injury and Death in Collegiate Athletes, there is inclusion of the transition phase (time following breaks, vacations, etc. for allowing athletes to transition back to workouts). This transition phase should focus on acclimatization. Conditioning programs require an additional four to six weeks to achieve goals for sport specific conditioning. This conditioning period is separate from the transition phase.

As we read through articles and literature that have been investigated and reviewed related EHS cases, a recurring theme is the unnecessary lack of conditioning and/or acclimatization.

I believe that we should focus NCAA-wide and NATA-wide communication on best practices on prevention of EHS and the others listed. These principles should be communicated as mandatory best practices, not optional. Exceptions or short cuts should be met with the possibility of review and penalty. Our student-athletes deserve our highest level of commitment to their health and safety when they need us the most!

Think Excellence,



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References

NCAA Sports Science Institute Inter-Association Recommendations : Preventing Catastrophic Injury and Death in Collegiate Athletes

<http://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/preventing-catastrophic-injury-and-death-collegiate-athletes>

ICSM Guidance on the *Interassociation Recommendations: Preventing Catastrophic Injury and Death in Collegiate Athletics*

[file:///C:/Users/grantm/Downloads/icsm_guidelines_for_preventing_catastrophic_death_in_collegiate_athletics%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/grantm/Downloads/icsm_guidelines_for_preventing_catastrophic_death_in_collegiate_athletics%20(1).pdf)

Core Principles of Resocialization of Sport

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