



Efforts to support athletes during COVID-19 outbreak: correspondence

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Dear Editor,

We read the article entitled “Federal medical biological agency of Russia’s efforts to support Russian athletes during COVID-19 outbreak [1].” The attempt for management of problem and situation of COVID-19 among Russian athletes are reported in the present study. The aim of the present correspondence is to discuss on the current efforts to support athletes during COVID-19 outbreak with a specific reference to the reported situation by Zholinsky et al.

The number of athletes who developed COVID-19, according to Zholinsky et al., was rather low [1]. The disease was moderate or asymptomatic in the majority of affected athletes [1]. Due to tight quarantine efforts, the infection rate among Russian sportsmen was initially substantially lower than the overall population [1]. Since this study is a retrospective analysis and there are no data on the laboratory diagnostic methodology, it cannot exclude the possibility of false negative due to COVID-19 diagnostic test. In addition, there might be some asymptomatic infection that is underreported. Therefore, the prevalence or clinical symptoms in the present report might not reflect the actual situation among the athletes.

In fact, a good adjustment to COVID-19 pandemic is necessary. For supporting the athlete, specific adjustment to promote safe training, maintaining physical and mental fitness during pandemic period is very important [2]. Safe training and sport competition are the main aims for any athletes [3]. However, similar to general population, COVID-19 infection in athlete is possible. If there is an infection, a specific protocol to support infected athlete for returning to normal stage is needed [3]. Nevertheless, the data on this topic are limited. In the present report, the COVID-19 among athletes is also described [1]. This study can show that the athletes, who

have background fitness and strengths, have similar chance to get infection but the symptoms are usually mild. This can confirm the importance of basic health status and fitness as preventive factors against severe COVID-19 and it can also support that vaccination is necessary for any groups regardless of basic health fitness. Nevertheless, as earlier noted, the issue for further researching is how to manage and refresh the COVID-19-infected cases to regain full strength.

In this study, researchers from the FMBA’s Center for Sports Medicine’s Research Department investigated the prevalence of COVID-19 and variants of its course in Russian athletes [1]. The number of positive COVID-19 cases from screening, detection period, site of detection and the clinical symptoms are summarized. Quarantine training camps with regular PCR testing, according to Zholinsky et al., are an effective strategy to maintain sport-specific training during the pandemic [1]. As earlier noted, the success also depends on the proper diagnostic investigation, which might require the collaboration from medical technologist and clinical epidemiologist.

In addition, according to Zholinsky et al., there must be follow-up to detect and treat probable long-term impacts, as well as develop techniques to address such effects in the most effective way feasible [1]. Some specific health problems such as cardiovascular problem are highlighted by Zholinsky et al. [1]. Clinically, COVID-19 might affect several systems and there might be sequelae that can cause a long-term clinical problem. The physical and mental aspects of an athlete’s comeback to sport after being infected with COVID-19 must be properly addressed. In the year 2021, a report titled “Are elite track and field athletes on track? The impact of COVID-19 outbreak on sleep behavior and training characteristics [4]” explains how elite athletes’ sleep habits were affected during the first lockdown following the start of the pandemic. Since there is a domestic confinement for several days as a result of the COVID-19 infection, the quarantine that must be carried out can be compared to a lockdown. In terms of a safe return to competition, sleep is also important, and it is a topic that is often disregarded.

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As a result, a proper return to physical activity necessitates considering sleep as a topic of interest.

In conclusion, the COVID-19 is still important problem for athlete. The diagnosis of the infection is challenge. The good management is necessary in infected cases and there must be a good plan for post-COVID-19 care to promote regaining of full strength for the athletes who experience illness. A specific program for rehabilitation aiming at physical and mental health recovery is required. This should be adaptable for each specific individual case.

Declarations

Conflict of interest Both the authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Ethical approval This article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by any of the authors.

Informed consent This type of study formal consent is not required.

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