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News

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*****PA conference focuses on
athletic injuries and the
"difficult patient."

DALLAS--"Ten years ago you never saw women with athletic injuries, but now that they are asserting equal rights on the athletic field, we are seeing many more women with orthopedic problems," says Dr. Richard Jones, assistant professor of orthopedics at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas and chief of Orthopedic Surgery at Dallas VA Medical Center.

In addition, says Jones, people of all ages have discovered the "pleasure in the pain" of athletics.

Evidence of the "groundswell in athletic participation" is seen everywhere--from the kindergartners and first-graders playing soccer at school to the middle-aged couple jogging along a residential street.

To help physician assistants seeing victims of this groundswell of activity, the orthopedist will present "Recognition and Management of Common Athletic Injuries" for the Texas Academy of Physician Assistants' Fifth Annual Continuing Education Conference Feb. 29-March 1 in Dallas.

As more and more people are finding their bodies are important, orthopedic surgeons, primary care physicians and physician assistants are seeing more major traumatic injuries and more body abuse, which Jones calls "over-use." People often do more than their bodies are capable of, with resulting inflammation and pain.

"We used to say, 'Rest, and everything will get better,' but now joggers and others are semi-addicted, and they don't want to rest." By using orthotic devices such as splints and braces and by helping people retrain themselves so that they are able to do more, physicians and PAs are able to keep athletic "addicts" playing.

Women athletes have special orthopedic problems, says Jones, because their ligaments are more lax than men's. This causes many knee-cap problems. Also, a woman's pelvis is more wide-base, causing excess rotation for a woman jogger. As a result, many more women with knee, ankle and foot pain are seen. The pain is caused by inflammation in the joints, and the best anti-inflammatory agent is still aspirin.

Also important to physician assistants is patient relations, and people are seldom at their best when ill. Some patients are hard to please, hard to convince or hard to comprehend, says David K. Lee, who will discuss "The Difficult Patient--How to be Effective."

Lee, assistant professor of internal medicine and health care science at UTHSCD, says difficult patients "Have an unmet need--one the patient may not express or even understand." Health care providers should get into the patient's background and try to understand the patient's daily life, problems and aspirations. This is time-consuming but worth it in the long run, he says.

A hostile patient, for example, may be angry at the physician or the PA or angry at the system. A long waiting time may trigger hostility.

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"You should be frank and try to find out why the patient is angry. Sometimes if they just express their anger, they get over it," says Lee.

Other topics to be presented by UTHSCD faculty at the convention include:

"Child Abuse--A National Malady," Dr. Roy Heyne, Jr., a clinical assistant professor of pediatrics;

"Low Back Pain--Fact & Fiction," James McKinney, PAC, Dallas VA Medical Center;

"Radiation--What Are the Limits?" Dr. Ed Griffin, Radiation Safety Officer;

"Death and Dying--Society and the Health Professional," Dr. Charles McAleer, associate professor of rehabilitation science;

"Urology Today--New Developments," Dr. Paul Peters, chairman of the Urology Division.

Other topics include:

"Preventive Medicine in Family Practice," John Young, PAC, private practice, Caldwell, Texas.

"Neonatal Nutrition--Breast vs. Bottle," Dr. Dolores Carruth, director of nurseries and staff neonatologist at Baylor University Medical Center.

To maintain certification PAs must get 100 hours of continuing medical education credit every two years. This conference is accredited for 15 hours, according to Barry Buschmann, chairman of the continuing education committee of TAPA and instructor in the PA program at UTHSCD.

The conference will be held at the Dunfey Dallas Hotel.

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