



The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) is proud to feature James H. Lynch, MD, MS, FACSM, in this issue's Clinician Profile. Dr. Lynch is an Army physician stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina with the United States Army Special Operations Command. He is an assistant professor in the Department of Military and Emergency Medicine at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences. Dr. Lynch earned a Bachelor of Science degree from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1989, a Master of Science in health care improvement from Dartmouth College in 2001, and his medical degree from Brown Medical School in 2003. He is board certified in Family Medicine and Sports Medicine. Dr. Lynch is a volunteer physician with the U.S. Olympic Committee and has supported USA Swimming as a national team physician since 2011. His clinical interests include traumatic brain injury, musculoskeletal ultrasound, and regenerative injection therapies.

What inspired you to pursue a career in sports medicine?

The patients. Early in my medical training I knew that I wanted to care for athletes. Like many other sports medicine professionals, I played sports from little league through college and naturally gravitated to choosing a career working with athletic patients. Whether young healthy elite athletes or aging weekend warriors (like me), it is the athletes' attitudes that inspire me now. I am appreciative of their desire to be healthy and stay active in whatever sport or recreation that is important to them. I love the opportunity to help athletes optimize their performance and stay healthy, and after an injury to help them get back in their game.

What is the most common question you are asked as a sports medicine physician?

Most of my patients are very interested in peak performance. With a wealth of information and misinformation on this subject on the Internet, I am frequently asked about supplements and nutrition. I've been able to reach out to and learn from many knowledgeable exercise scientists and sports dietitians. Thank goodness for this because my traditional medical education (I believe like most physicians) was not heavily focused in these areas. Again, this reminds me that I am but one piece of the sports medicine team.

What do you find most rewarding in your current position?

As a sports medicine physician in a military tactical unit, I am blessed with having a population of high performance

warrior athletes completely dedicated to their sustained optimal health and performance in order to support our nation's strategic objectives. That's a pretty awesome job! The stakes are different, but as with elite athletics the focus on injury prevention, optimizing performance, and rapid return to play is critical. Helping an injured patient return to the activity that they love is extremely rewarding. I see this also as a mental health issue for many people. Not being able to run or swim or play tennis, if that is your passion, is extremely frustrating. This impacts sleep, emotions, and overall sense of well-being. So, I see treating a "sports injury" really as treating both physical and mental health. And there is a ripple effect on the team. Similarly, when I perform a stellate ganglion block on a patient with posttraumatic stress symptoms from dysfunctional sympathetic tone, this impacts not only the patient's mental health but the well-being of his or her family and teammates as well. This is tremendously impactful, and I consider being part of the recovery process a huge privilege.

You have been an ACSM member since 2005. How has ACSM grown and changed since you became a member?

That is tough to say. ACSM is such a diverse and dynamic organization. Earlier in my career I didn't appreciate everything that ACSM does, so what has changed has been my appreciation of how extensive ACSM's influence is. The Exercise is Medicine[®] initiative drove this point home for me. Listening to Robert E. Sallis, MD, FACSM, present the benefits of exercise several years ago at ACSM's Annual Meeting and then watching the ripple effect across our nation made me appreciate the influence the College can have on public health.

How has membership in ACSM influenced your career?

What I love about ACSM is the multidisciplinary nature of the College. As a physician, I have been amazed at the breadth and depth of the collective experience in exercise and sports sciences across our many disciplines. The College has expanded my network beyond simply other sports medicine physicians. This network now provides me with colleagues and experiences which assist in applying the always-evolving body of sports science to the population of athletes in my clinical practice.

What is your best advice to other sports medicine clinicians?

Medicine is a team sport. A multidisciplinary team of medical professionals can provide more comprehensive care than any one individual no matter how good they think they are.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

(What is this "spare time" that you speak of?) I love watching youth sports with my wife and have been blessed with three athletic children whom we have watched through many seasons of basketball, volleyball, golf, baseball, field hockey, lacrosse, and soccer.