

11th Biennial International Congress of the South African Sports Medicine Association

This issue of the *Journal* coincides with the 11th Biennial International Congress of the South African Sports Medicine Association (SASMA) being held in Johannesburg. The academic programme is excellent, and the faculty of presenters from FIMS (International Sports Medicine Federation), the ACSM (American College of Sports Medicine) and others from around the world will showcase the many aspects of relevance to physicians, orthopaedic surgeons, radiologists, sports scientists, physiotherapists, biokineticists, dieticians, psychologists, chiropractors, podiatrists and other professionals involved in sport and sports medicine.

SASMA has continued to contribute to the sporting population by means of service provision from experts in the field; assisting sporting federations and macro sporting structures; educating members in continuing education programmes through regional meetings, individual FIMS membership, SportsMed Updates, the *Journal*, and assisting members in opportunities for involvement in sport and sports events.

The *Journal*, under the chief editorship of Professor Mike Lambert, continues to publish quality peer-reviewed articles, and I encourage members to submit material.

This issue is also the last in my tenure as President of the Association, as I hand over to the President-Elect, Dr Ismail Jakoet. I wish him all the best in his term of office. It has been a challenging, yet exciting and rewarding time for me. I thank those members who have supported me and the Association in efforts to maximise the Association's standing both nationally and internationally, and in serving members as best as possible. A special thanks to the national secretary and congress organiser, Ms Lauren Mann, who has worked tirelessly for the Association, its members and the Congress.

Demitri Constantinou
President 2003 - 2005

Nutritional supplements – what are the facts?



All health practitioners involved with either high-performance sport or the promotion of physical activity will have been asked at some stage about their views on nutritional supplements. Unfortunately media hype has created the impression that nutritional supplements can provide a quick alternative to systematic training and sound, balanced eating principles.

This view, often driven by companies that stand to make money out of the sales of their supplements, has created confusion among the public. An article in this issue (entitled 'A practical guide to the use of nutritional supplements in South Africa' by Kohler, Meltzer, Jakoet and Noakes), attempts to de-mystify nutritional supplements by presenting them in a systematic way, based on the evidence, or lack thereof, supporting their efficacy. This article will be a valuable resource among health professionals as it contains a wealth of information and places the use of supplements in context alongside the contribution to performance of genetics, sleep, rest/training, daily nutrition, mental attitude, equipment and skills. The risk of having a positive drug test after taking certain supplements is also discussed in the paper.

This becomes more relevant now after a German court awarded damages to a soccer player who failed a drug test, after he convinced the courts that he ingested a contaminated supplement. The player was able to claim financial compensation from the supplement company for the loss of earnings while he served his sentence (Striegel *et al.* Contaminated nutritional supplement – legal protection for elite athletes who tested positive : A case report from Germany. *J Sports Sci* 2005; **23**: 723-726). In future any high-profile sportsperson failing a drug test could easily put a company out of business if this landmark case in Germany starts a trend in other countries. This puts pressure on those people prescribing nutritional supplements as well as companies that manufacture supplements, and makes them accountable for any consequences of contamination. In particular it might make the 'fly-by-night' companies, out to make a quick buck, decide to seek money-making opportunities in other industries with a lower risk. The companies prepared to be accountable for their products will in all likelihood be the companies with integrity and that offer a valid product.

Once again, this *Journal* is packed with a variety of topics of interest to the reader.

Mike Lambert
Editor-in Chief