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**Sex and Drugs and Olympic Gold: Science, Medicine  
and the International Olympic Committee in the  
1960s**

Science is a critical part of elite athletic competition today. The Sydney Olympics showcased talents developed through years

of perseverance, training and the application of scientific discovery. According to a recent article in *New Scientist* magazine, scientists continue to try to isolate physiological factors that limit improved performances. How does this increasingly technical information make its way from the laboratory to the playing field? Once the knowledge is available, what type of policy needs to be established by sport governing bodies to provide for its fair use? This paper analyzes the ways in which the International Olympic Committee (IOC) confronted and made critical policy decisions based on highly technical scientific and medical knowledge, in the period leading up to and including the 1960s.

The IOC recognizes the value of science, in the form of financial donations, and through the expansion in recent years of the Olympic Scientific Congress. In addition, members of the IOC have historically been interested in the potential connections among sport, science and medicine. For example, Medical-Scientific Congresses were first held in conjunction with the Winter Olympic Games of St. Moritz in 1928. Perhaps more importantly, since 1952, the Federation Internationale Medicine Sportive (FIMS) has had a relationship with the IOC. FIMS Secretary-General Giuseppe La Cava corresponded with IOC Chancellor Otto Mayer and FIMS was “officially recognized” by the IOC at its meeting in Oslo in 1952.

The post-WWII Olympics provide a fertile ground for examining the connection between science and the Olympics. The years leading up to the 10th Olympiad in Mexico City were the beginning of this modern relationship among science, medicine and Olympic competition. The period before the 1968 Games in Mexico City saw expanded interest on the part of athletes, sport officials, spectators and scientists on the effects of altitude on athletic performance. Numerous studies were conducted to attempt to determine the efficacy of different training regimens on athletic performance at an altitude of 2300m.

Doping was the next scientific/medical problem that confronted the IOC in the early 1960s. The suspicious death of a Danish cyclist during the 1960 Rome Olympics led IOC President Avery Brundage to appoint a subcommittee of doctors who were members of the IOC - Dr. (Sir Arthur) Porritt, Dr. Gruss, Dr. Ferriera-Santos and Dr. Sosa - to deal with the subject. However, the Committee was not very effective. In the early 1960s Ferriera-

Santos passed away suddenly, right after finishing the initial report on doping and Porritt became Governor-General of New Zealand and resigned from the IOC because of his new duties. Thus, at a time when critical scientific and medical questions were coming before the IOC, they lost two senior, respected members who could have greatly influenced the debate about these scientific and medical topics.

The question of “sex testing” arose at the same time as the doping inquiries began. Charges were made against certain women athletes, particularly in track and field, that they might not be women at all. These accusations were frequently leveled against women from countries behind the “Iron Curtain.” Science would quickly enter both of these debates as officials tried to determine how to establish an athlete’s “true” gender and how to figure out if an athlete was attempting to “cheat” by doping.

This paper utilizes as sources scientific and medical reports from the 1960s press reports about athletics and science, and the archives of the IOC (including reports of the nascent Medical Commission and correspondence among members of the Commission and the IOC). The 1960s were a crucial time for the IOC, particularly in the way that this group came to understand the enormous amount of scientific information that became critical to the conduct of elite sport in that decade.

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Don Morrow

Allen Guttman  
Three NASSH Presidents

Gerald Gems