What is the AMSSM and how can it help me?

The American Medical Society for Sports Medicine (AMSSM) was organized in 1991 by a group of founding physicians who recognized the need for an organization within the field of sports medicine that addressed primary care, non-surgical conditions in the active individual. Our goal is to provide a link between the rapidly expanding core of knowledge related to sports medicine and its application to patients in a clinical setting. AMSSM, in conjunction with other sports organizations, sponsors several different Team Physician courses.

AMSSM has an annual meeting where sports medicine specialists meet to review and discuss the latest developments in sports medicine, present interesting cases and research, and foster collegial relationships with each other.

To find out more about AMSSM and what it has to offer you, please visit our web site at www.amssm.org.
The Sports Medicine Specialist - Could it be a career for you?
If you are interested in caring for active people of all ages and all levels of expertise from weekend warrior to elite athlete, you may be looking for a career as a sports medicine specialist.

What are Sports Medicine Specialists?
The Sports Medicine Specialist is a leader of the sports medicine team, which also includes specialty physicians and surgeons, athletic trainers, physical therapists, coaches, other personnel, and, of course, the athlete.

They are physicians with a primary specialty in Family Practice, Internal Medicine, Emergency Medicine, Pediatrics, or Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, most of whom obtain 1-2 years of additional training in sports medicine through accredited fellowship (sub-specialty) programs in Sports Medicine. Physicians, who are board certified in Family Practice, Internal Medicine, Emergency Medicine, or Pediatrics, are then eligible to take a subspecialty qualification examination in Sports Medicine. Additional forums, which add to the expertise of a Sports Medicine Specialist, include continuing education in sports medicine, and membership and participation in sports medicine societies.

What is the difference between a Sports Medicine Specialist and an Orthopedic Surgeon?
Both are well trained in musculoskeletal medicine. Sports Medicine Specialists specialize in the non-operative medical treatment of musculoskeletal sports conditions. Orthopedic surgeons are also trained in the operative treatment of these conditions. Approximately 90% of all sports injuries are non-surgical, and Sports Medicine Specialists can expedite referral to an orthopedic/sports surgeon when indicated, and can help guide referrals to appropriate rehabilitative care and ancillary services as needed. Common examples of musculoskeletal problems include:
- Acute injuries (such as ankle sprains, muscle strains, knee & shoulder injuries, and fractures)
- Overuse injuries (such as tendonitis, stress fractures)

Sports Medicine Specialist have received additional training in the non-musculoskeletal aspects of sports medicine. Common examples of these include:
- Mild traumatic brain injury and other head injuries
- Athletes with chronic or acute illness (such as infectious mononucleosis, asthma or diabetes)
- Nutrition, supplements, ergogenic aids and performance issues
- Exercise prescription for patients who want to increase their fitness
- Injury prevention
- ‘Return to play’ decisions in the sick or injured athlete
- Strength training and conditioning
- Healthy lifestyle promotion

Most Sports Medicine Specialists also serve as Team Physicians for local and/or National teams and clubs. These physicians must fulfill published qualifications with the following responsibilities:
- Pre-participation physical examination
- Injury assessment and management
- Care of sports-related and general medical needs of athletes
- Special populations (elderly, disabled, women, youth, etc)
- Sports psychology issues
- Addressing substance use
- Education & counseling on illness & injury prevention
- Coordinating care with other members of the sports medicine team to include athletic trainers, physical therapists, personal physicians, other medical and surgical specialties, and other ancillary personnel of specialty care and rehabilitation
- Communication with athletic trainers, coaches, school administration, as well as athletes and their families

What steps do I need to take to become a sports medicine specialist?
Select rotations and electives in medical school with both primary care and orthopedic sports physicians to find out where your interests and talents lie.

If treating the full spectrum of an athlete's medical needs is for you, pick a primary care residency program that best suits your needs and interests (family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, emergency medicine or physical medicine and rehabilitation).

During medical school and residency, try to increase your exposure to sports medicine by:
- Rotating or taking electives with sports medicine specialists
- Seeking out sports medicine practitioners who may serve as mentors
- To find an AMSSM physician in your area, visit the AMSSM website at www.amssm.org
- Participate in a sports medicine research project
- Volunteer to assist with coverage of local athletic events or pre-participation exams
- Join and participate in sports medicine organizations such as the AMSSM
- Attend sports medicine meetings and conferences

A list of accredited sports medicine fellowships is published each year by the Physician and Sportsmedicine and is listed on the AMSSM website at www.amssm.org. People generally apply for a sports medicine fellowship at the beginning of their third year of residency. Interviews take place September through December and the match occurs in early January.