

## Sports-Related Injuries: Common sense is the key to prevention and treatment

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Dr. Bill Stucky loves sports. He also loves helping others through his practice of medicine. Both of these loves, however, can clash during a typical work day. As a surgeon with the Miller Orthopaedic Clinic, Dr. Stucky gets involved with sports-related injuries almost daily. And, although he enjoys being around athletes, Dr. Stucky would rather see them on the field of competition than in his office or the emergency department.

"There are several common types of injuries I frequently see that are the result of sports-related activities, with some being more serious than others" he says. Among those most common include strains and sprains to the ankles, wrists, shoulders and complaints of back pain "Strains to joints, including the ankle and shoulder joints, are due primarily to overexertion and stress to the joint," Stucky notes. Other common but more serious injuries include cartilage tears in the knees, wrists and ankles, various types of fractures and rotator cuff tears in the shoulders of his patients. When patients see Dr. Stucky with an injury resulting from participating in a sport, he can sympathize because he has participated in sports all of his life.

"Growing up in Michigan, I participated in sports all of the time. In fact, my love of medicine grew partly from observing athletic performance," Stucky said. "I appreciated the mechanics of the human body at an early age and knew that I would somehow be involved in a biological science." Becoming a physician and surgeon was a natural progression for him. And, as busy as he is, Dr. Stucky still finds time to engage in sports activities. He participates in a recreational league basketball program as well as an indoor soccer program at the Cleveland County Family YMCA.

"I guess my greatest thrill is being around athletes," Stucky quickly admits. It is so much of a thrill for him that he is involved, and is in demand, at several athletic and educational institutions around Cleveland County. Stucky takes care of sports-related injuries from Kings Mountain High School. His pride with the high school affiliation is evident. Whether it's football, basketball or track and field teams, Dr. Stucky treats the injuries of all participants. In addition, Stucky works with Gardner-Webb University's sports programs and treats their athletes as necessary. This perhaps takes Stucky back to his days of basketball and track and field at Vanderbilt University, in Nashville, Tennessee. He participated in Vanderbilt's varsity programs for four years during his undergraduate studies. After that, it was on to medical school at the University of Michigan where as student, he was sent out to cover all types of sporting events and assist with the healthcare for all of the teams. After medical school, Dr. Stucky completed his residency training in orthopaedic surgery at Wayne State University.

"The athlete is a unique individual. They expect more from themselves than most others and do not like the fact that an injury has them sidelined," Stucky says. "Because most of the athletes I see as patients do not make

their livings from sports, the course of treatment for them may differ a little from professional athletes." He is quick to point out that the treatment goal for the "weekend athlete" first addresses the individuals return to being a productive part of his or her family and to get back to work before venturing back into the world of competition. Thankfully, the recovery period for most sports-related injuries is fairly quick. Dr. Stucky noted that the average recovery for a strain or sprain is from several days to several weeks and the period that one can expect to be incapacitated from a fracture of the ankle is anywhere from four to six weeks. Recovery is different because individuals are different and it may take a little longer for some to get back to regular participation in a sport than others," he said. Dr. Stucky, however, remembers one avid golfer that just couldn't be sidelined. "I had one patient that was back on the golf course within two weeks after a fracture. He played in a walking cast," Stucky exclaimed.

Some injuries, however, are more serious and require more than just rest. Fractures and cartilage tears are two prime examples. "Most fractures require casting and if the bone is not properly aligned, pinning may be required," Stucky said. Pinning is a process by which a small wire or "pin" is used to help hold the bone in proper alignment. The pin provides the appropriate support to the healing bone and helps secure the bone-to-bone contact much better than casting alone. In addition, physical therapy is often prescribed to assist the patient in fully recovering from a fracture. Having a licensed therapist direct the postoperative healing process is very important. These people can focus on the patient's abilities and defects and guide them through a well-planned recovery process. "Although not every fracture requires physical therapy, those that do significantly benefit from the sessions.

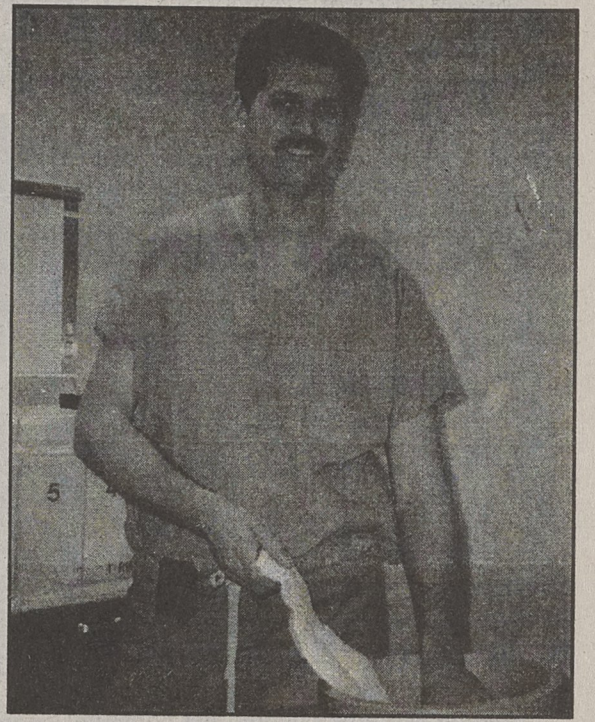
Cartilage tears and tears in the shoulder's rotator cuff may also require physical therapy. In some cases, however, nonsurgical treatments will not suffice. Dr. Stucky is quick to note that while surgical treatment is reserved for injuries that cannot be treated otherwise, it is often less invasive and debilitating than the patient expects it to be. "We have a variety of diagnostic and treatment options available today that lessen the severity of surgical procedures and help speed the healing process," Stucky notes. The majority of surgeries for these types of injuries are performed arthroscopically. "The arthroscope is a very small instrument that is inserted into the joint to assist in diagnosing the injury as well as to deliver the actual treatment," Stucky explains. By using arthroscopic techniques, the patient is treated with minimal surgical invasion and the recovery process is accelerated. Stucky performs these and other surgical procedures at Kings Mountain Hospital. "The atmosphere at Kings Mountain Hospital is great. The nurses and other support staff personnel are extremely competent and bend over backward to help the patients and physicians, he said.

Although many may think that sports-related injuries stem from only fierce competition, Dr. Stucky notes that nothing could be further from the truth. "People are injured everyday from participating

in the activities that they love and those they have been doing for years" he said. Non-contact sports such as golf, tennis and running yield some of the highest injury rates for the "weekend athlete." Participating in sports activities can put a strain on joints and muscles if they are not conditioned for the activity. And, it is not just young people that are injured. Dr. Stucky has treated senior citizens for sports-related injuries and considers this group to be prime examples of the benefits of regular exercise. "Although I work with young athletes at Kings Mountain High School and Gardner-Webb University, some of the most dedicated participants in sports activities are the seniors of the community," he notes.

By now you may be under the impression that nearly everyone that participates in a sport or related activity will automatically be injured. That simply is not the case. There are several things that we can do to minimize the potential for injury from participation in a sports-related activity. Dr. Stucky says that developing a regular exercise program is the number one prevention measure we can take to lessen the chance for injury and to minimize the severity of an injury if one does occur. "If people would exercise every other day? They would be considerably less likely to have an over exertion type of injury???" he said. He adds that exercising every day is optimal, however, an every other day routine is usually sufficient for all but the most competitive people and activities. "People that exercise regularly build endurance and condition their muscles and joints for the extra stress that sports activities often demand." There is one additional point regarding exercise that is important. Dr. Stucky recommends that people periodically change their exercise routine. The term "cross-training" came into fashion in the mid-eighties. Although somewhat of a buzz word, cross-training is extremely beneficial to a proper exercise routine. "I see injuries from people that regularly exercise. But, for the most part, these people do the same exercise all of the time," Stucky said. "If people would change their routine, their chance for injury would be significantly reduced." Dr. Stucky gave the example of a runner. He noted that the runner, although in potentially excellent physical condition, is continuously using and taxing the joints and muscles in his or her legs. If that same athlete would rotate running with bicycling for example, they would get virtually the same benefit from the exercise without the isolated strain on the legs.

Although preconditioning of the body is the most effective method for avoiding an injury, there is another measure that we can take that may be just as effective. "Proper warm-up activities and stretching of the muscles and joints is essential before beginning any activity," he notes. As the body becomes warm, there is less likelihood of the



DR. BILL STUCKEY

injury because the joints and muscles become more limber and ready to accept the stress of the activity. After the muscles and joints are warm, the activity does not seem as demanding on the body. We've all heard that warming-up your car's engine is important before beginning a drive. It is not much different for your body.

A final precaution to avoid sports-related injury is a proper cool-down period following an intense activity. These measures, along with the right nutrition and the appropriate rest in between activities will give you the edge in voiding injury. After all, sports activities are supposed to be fun.

As the weather warms up, more and more people will be out doing their thing. Before you jump in all at once, however, remember Dr. Stucky's tips for injury prevention. And, if you see a six-foot six-inch man in green hospital scrubs on the basketball court this spring, it may just be Dr. Stucky. If I were you, I think twice before challenging him to a game of one-on-one.

## Shannon Blanton: Part of the Heritage at Kings Mountain Hospital

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Shannon Blanton was fascinated by the healthcare industry at an early age. Her fascination must have had an impact because she has devoted her entire 39-year career to it. And, as you may imagine, she is still fascinated with the rapid advancements of technology and patient care. After being in the middle of it all for the last 39 years, however, one may think a bit of the excitement may have diminished. Not for Shannon. Maybe her lingering fascination stems from witnessing the ongoing evolution of modern medical and support technology at Kings Mountain Hospital. Maybe it's because she has a bit of ownership in that evolution. Perhaps both thoughts are correct. You see, Shannon Blanton has not only witnessed the evolution of the modern medical facility in Kings Mountain, she has lived it. Her entire career has been devoted to local healthcare here in Kings Mountain.

"I was hired in 1960 as a medical records clerk for Kings Mountain Hospital," she proudly states. Although Kings Mountain Hospital was a very small facility, "it was as modern as any hospital I had ever been in," she added. Indeed Kings Mountain Hospital was modern in 1960, however, practically everything has changed at the hospital, including the specialty area of medical records. "Way back then, people could be admitted to the hospital for just about anything," Blanton said. "Nobody ever questioned the physicians and there was no pressure from insurance companies and governmental agencies to speed the process of hospitalization and patient discharge." Patient records were basically laid aside and used only when information was needed. "There was not too much in the patient record back then and it was not considered a vital part of the hospitalization process as it is today," Blanton said.

After graduating from Number Three Township High School and earning an Associate Degree in Liberal Arts from Gardner-Webb College, Shannon went to work at Cleveland Memorial Hospital for a period of one year. "I worked at Cleveland as part of my field experience and that experience allowed me to take the exam to become an Accredited Record Technician," she said. After her brief stay at Cleveland Memorial Hospital, she was hired to head the practically nonexistent Medical Records Department at Kings Mountain Hospital. "Back then, the department consisted of a small office across from administration. Quarters were so tight that I could almost reach out and touch the nursing department from my desk," she noted. Overall medical records technology had not reached its zenith and Shannon was placed in world of index cards, manual filing drawers, simplistic dictation equipment and one typewriter. "As simple as it seems now, I was awed by the system of medical records and thought the process was as good as it was ever going to get" she said.

That was, however, simply not the case. As third party payors began requiring more proof of illness and governmental programs like Medicare came into being, things became very different in the life of a medical records professional. "All of a sudden, medical records were important and we were required to include a lot more information about our patients," Blanton said. Physicians began dictating more and more patient information and payors along with regulatory agencies began wanting to see every bit of it. Now, instead of index cards and manual filing, there are computerized records and digital equipment that allows dictation to be downloaded directly to Shannon's computer at the hospital via modem from any home-based transcriptionist in the United States. "Today's technology for medical records is staggering when compared to that of the 1960's," she said. Shannon, however, is quick to point out that although the technology has changed and medical records have become more complicated, the

efficiency of the department has grown right along with the sophistication. "We remain proud of our efficiency," Blanton says. "We could always have a medical record retrieved in about three minutes at Kings Mountain Hospital, and still can," she added. "Rapid retrievals are important when we have an emergency patient and the physician is waiting on the information that may save his or her life.

As time passed and the healthcare needs of Kings Mountain changed, so did the hospital. "I have been through several expansions at Kings Mountain Hospital and it feels good to know that when the needs of our community changed, we have been able to grow and respond to those needs appropriately," she said. Although Blanton has been a part of Kings Mountain Hospital for the past 39 years, she has only worked for three administrators. "Mr. Grady Howard hired me and I worked for him from 1960 to 1985. He still comes by to visit me once in a while," she said. From 1985 until 1994, Shannon was under the leadership of Huitt Reep and from 1994 until the present, she has worked for current administrator Hank Neal.

"I have always had a great rapport with the leadership and the medical staff of the hospital," Blanton said. In fact, she thinks of the employees and physicians at Kings Mountain Hospital as her second family. "It may sound old fashioned, but I really love my job and sort of feel like this is my hospital and I have some ownership in its progression," she said. In fact, she loved and trusted the organization so much that she chose Kings Mountain Hospital as the place to deliver her only daughter. "I worked the day I delivered," she remembered. "I grabbed my suitcase at the end of the day and checked into the maternity area." Things have indeed changed since then. Her stay was seven days after a normal delivery and her hospital bill, including medicine and nursery services, totaled a whopping \$167.11.

"The people at Kings Mountain Hospital are great and I have made some real good friends here," she notes. And, her friends and memories of the past 39 years are filling her mind these days. You see, Shannon plans to retire March 31. Yes, after nearly four decades of dedicated service to the Kings Mountain community, she will give up her position as Director of Medical Records and concentrate on other important things.

"There is joy mixed with anxiety in my heart. I am happy and sad at the same time, if that makes any sense," she explains. She is not the only one with mixed feelings about her looming retirement. Hank Neal, administrator of the hospital says "Shannon's wealth of knowledge and years of experience have been an invaluable asset to Kings Mountain Hospital and it will be a tremendous challenge to replace her." Indeed there may be a void in the organization after Shannon's retirement, but hardly time for one in her personal life. "I want to spend time with my husband, Bill and follow my three grandchildren in their sports," she said. I want to take piano lessons, do some volunteer work at a nursing home, take some bible study courses at Gardner-Webb University, get going with my physical fitness and continue to strengthen my spiritual life," she added.

All of that could bog-down a youngster, but not Shannon Blanton. She has a special drive and it is evident to those that know her. She is an unassuming woman that has significantly contributed to the advancement of health in Kings Mountain by working diligently behind the scenes. Now, she is ready to turn her energies toward her family and herself. "I plan to keep busy doing the things I want to do and I want to continue living a simple life," she said. "If, however, my hospital needs me to help out once in a while, that will be fine too," she added. Her plans seem to fit the natural progression of her life and blend with the continual evolution that she is accustomed to. Retirement sounds like a great beginning to the next step of Shannon's life and we all wish her well.

## Kings Mountain Hospital And These Plans Unlock The Power Of The System For You

### PPO PLANS

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Alliance Preferred Network  
BlueCross BlueShield of NC  
CAPP CARE  
CIGNA  
CNA Health Partners  
Ethix Southeast  
Health Care Savings  
HealthStar  
Healthsource  
Jefferson Pilot  
Joan Fabrics  
Mecklenburg Medical Society  
MedCost  
NC Teachers/State Employees  
PHP of SC  
Premier  
Primary Physician Care  
Prudential  
SC State Employees  
United Healthcare  
Wal-Mart  
WellPath

### POINT-OF-SERVICE PLANS

Aetna US Healthcare  
Atlantic Health Plans  
BlueCross BlueShield of NC  
CAPP CARE  
CIGNA Flexcare

Companion Health Care  
Doctors Health Plan  
Ethix Southeast  
Health Care Savings  
HealthStar  
HealthSource  
Jefferson Pilot  
Kanawha HealthCare  
MedCost  
PHP of SC  
Premier  
Prudential  
The Wellness Plan  
United Healthcare  
WellPath

### HMO PLANS

Aetna US Healthcare  
Atlantic Health Plans  
BlueCross BlueShield of NC  
Companion Health Care  
Doctors Health Plan  
Healthsource  
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Kanawha HealthCare  
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