



[Medical interests in gymnastics and athletics]

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Abstract: Since time immemorial authors have noticed the usefulness of physical activity. In the 18th century C von Linné was a spokesman for bodily exercise, and in the beginning of the 19th century P. H. Ling shaped the Swedish gymnastics and founded the Gymnastiska Centralinstitutet in 1813. He aimed at harmonious bodies according to the models of the classic antiquity. Many physicians, I. and F. Holmgren saw the value of the gymnastics. Completing the Ling gymnastics, there was a growing interest in physical performance, i.e., athletics. Above all, the contributions of the officer V. Balck, culminating at the olympic games in Stockholm 1912, made athletics a national movement. Since 1913 it receives an annual economic support from the state. Some physicians feared from overexertion in athletics but they appreciated physical performance. However, they demanded that you should be wholly full-grown prior to great exertions. An important part of the Ling program was remedial gymnastics which was more and more estimated after P. Haglund had asserted its value. T. Sjöstrand's studies became a good basis for evaluating the effect of physical training in both healthy and sick persons. It was not until the 1950s that the first studies, later confirmed, gave holds for the view that physical training was good for public health. But the average life span does not seem to be influenced by physical activities. Now and then training had earlier been used as therapy for disparate sorts of diseases but most rationally for disturbed functions of the locomotor system. Training became an important part of medical rehabilitation only after the second world war. Gymnastics and athletics at school have always had a solid support by physicians. The subject has nowadays so few hours that it cannot result in safe training habits for the future.

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