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CAN NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS HELP EXERCISE-INDUCED IMMUNODEPRESSION?

Lindy Castell¹

KEY WORDS: Exercise immunonutrition, nutritional supplements

In 2015 I and my co-editors (Louise Burke and Samantha Stear) published a book on Nutritional Supplements in Sport, Exercise and Health: An A-Z Guide. This contains contributions from more than 90 authors and deals with more than 140 topics. It is the culmination and update of a series of monthly publications which I initiated in the British Journal of Sports Medicine in 2009 and which ran until 2013. I launched this series because I was getting increasingly fed up with the way that some manufacturers (not all!) made a very great deal of money out of gullible and not-so-gullible athletes by selling them nutritional supplements which frequently were not very useful, were often poorly researched, if at all, and in some cases have actually had a deleterious effect on health.

The term dietary or nutritional supplement implies that it is something which supplements the diet. The Oxford English Dictionary definition of a supplement is "*Something added to supply a deficiency*". However, this definition is inconsistent with the majority of dietary supplement usage, with many supplements, or their individual ingredients, being nutrients or food chemicals for which the body does not have an estimated or theoretical requirement. Thus, there are clearly other factors that underpin their use by athletes.

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Wherever possible we sought material from leading researchers in their field. If they were not able to write for us, then we approached people who were competent scientific writers and who had an interest in the topic under consideration. We were fortunate enough to obtain articles or opinions from researchers who are well known in the fields of anti-doping, ethical principles and how to undertake good quality research.

In this talk I will be dealing with just a few, selected supplements, most of which are well known for one reason or another, for example, ergogenic benefits, which was our main focus. However, in particular, I will look at those supplements which have been reported to have a beneficial effect on the immune system. In addition, I shall highlight some

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aspects of the way in which future researchers might want to conduct studies in order to obtain the most accurate results, always bearing in mind the principle “Only if you are careful to handle all your samples in the same way, can you then make valid comparisons.”