

WITSIE AT THE CUTTING EDGE: Researcher Profile

Adjunct Professor Demitri Constantinou

Director: Centre for Exercise Science and Sports Medicine



Who are you and what is your academic/scientific training and background?

I am a medical doctor, class of 1987 (Wits). I have done postgraduate studies in sports science, sports medicine, emergency medicine, aviation medicine and submarine / diving medicine. I was awarded a travelling Fellowship with the International Sports Medicine Federation and am a professional Fellow of that Federation. I am a member of the American College of Sports Medicine. I received an exceptional service award from the South African Sports Medicine Association, which also awarded me lifetime membership. I have received awards and recognition for contribution to a number of sports and events including athletics, Paralympics, Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup 2010. I received a Faculty of Health Sciences research award in 2010.

Explain the nature of the research that you are currently undertaking.

I have a broad interest in sport and the role of exercise in chronic disease. Currently I am looking at a number of aspects of drugs in sport; including the use amongst university student-athletes and prevention strategies; androgen profiles in urine and the effect of a number of substances in performance enhancement. I am interested in risk factors for sudden cardiac arrest amongst young athletes. I am gathering data on exercise and cardiac disease management and about to start research with organ transplant patients.

What do you think is the most pertinent/relevant/significant contribution you have made to research/science/your field?

I would consider that the most pertinent contribution is not in a specific research area, but in having created an environment of research in this field at Wits. We are starting to see the blossoming of the seeds that have been planted in the Centre for Exercise Science and Sports Medicine with a significant growth of research in this field over the last few years. My scientifically relevant research I believe is what I am currently embarking on in the field of methylphenidate and human performance.

Did you have a particular mentor or supervisor who inspired you in research?

There are in fact many, many people that have inspired me from different perspectives. From my mother (who was a teacher) who has always had an astute, critical, and inquiring mind; high school teachers who made me think for myself, to the rich environment of my medical training with the privilege of having been taught by the likes of Professors Tobias, Allen, Myburgh, Barlow, Schamroth, Mitchell, Veriava and many many more that I wish I could name here. I must mention that I have been fortunate in having been mentored and inspired by Tim Noakes, Michael Lambert and Alan Rothberg.

Tell us about what you do when you're not busy at work and carrying out cutting-edge research.

I love spending time with my kids, even though they are no longer little. I like playing with Dynamite, Alaska and Oscar (my three Chows) and discussing the daily news with Flash (my Parrot fish). I love listening to rock music and reading esoteric books

Read one of Demitri's papers: Gradidge P. J-L, Constantinou D and Goldberg L. Risk of sudden cardiac arrest in young athletes. *The South African Journal of Sports Medicine* 2013; 25(2):53-54.