

BOXING (UPDATE 2001)

Summary

The CMA recommends to the appropriate government authorities that all boxing be banned in Canada. Until such time, strategies to prevent injury should be pursued.

Background

The CMA considers boxing a dangerous sport. While most sports involve risk of injury, boxing is distinct in that the basic intent of the boxer is to harm and incapacitate his or her opponent.

Boxers are at significant risk of injuries resulting in brain damage. Boxers are susceptible not only to acute life-threatening brain trauma, but also to the chronic and debilitating effects of gradual cerebral atrophy. Studies demonstrate a correlation between the number of bouts fought and the presence of cerebral abnormalities in boxers. There is also a risk of eye injury including long-term damage such as retinal tears and detachments.

Recommendations

CMA supports a ban on professional and amateur boxing in Canada. Until boxing is banned in this country, the following preventive strategies

should be pursued to reduce brain and eye injuries in boxers.

- Head blows should be prohibited. CMA encourages universal use of protective gear such as headgear and thumbless, impact-absorbing gloves.
- The World Boxing Council, World Boxing Association and other regulatory bodies should develop and enforce objective brain injury risk assessment tools to exclude individual boxers from sparring or fighting.
- The World Boxing Council, World Boxing Association and other regulatory bodies should develop and enforce standard criteria for referees, ringside officials and ringside physicians to halt sparring or boxing bouts when a boxer has experienced blows that place him or her at imminent risk of serious injury.

- The World Boxing Council, World Boxing Association and other regulatory bodies should encourage implementation of measures advocated by the World Medical Boxing Congress to reduce the incidence of brain and eye injuries.
- CMA believes that the professional responsibility of the physician who serves in a medical capacity in a boxing contest is to protect the health and safety of the contestants. The desire of spectators,

promoters of the event, or even injured athletes that they not be removed from the contest should not influence the physician's medical judgement.

- Further long-term outcome data should be obtained from boxers in order to more accurately establish successful preventive interventions. CMA encourages ongoing research into the causes and treatments of boxing-related injuries and into the effects of preventive strategies.