Whether you're a weekend warrior, an elite athlete, or somewhere in between: when you get hurt, you want state-of-the-art sports medicine. Turn to the physician that the pros do: Dr. Jacob Benford of Precision Sports Medicine. Dr. Benford has been practicing non-surgical sports medicine here in Santa Cruz for over ten years and is team physician for both UCSC and Cabrillo College athletics as well as the Santa Cruz Warriors.

He worked as an athletic trainer before medical school, including time with the San Francisco 49ers, so he has that additional understanding of the demands athletics places on our bodies. From concussion management to regenerative therapies, his head to toe treatments are results-oriented and designed to get you safely back to doing what you love.

Concussion Clinic

Dr. Benford’s concussion clinic is the only one of its kind in Santa Cruz County and one of the cornerstones of his practice. There’s been an increased awareness in recent years of the long-term dangers of concussion – dangers that are not confined to NFL athletes. Statistics show that 65% of emergency room visits for concussion were children aged 5-18. The state of California even enacted a bill (AB 25) that governs how concussion, even suspected concussion, should be treated.

Proper diagnosis is the first step; new information is changing the way concussions are diagnosed, so the first step is a proper analysis. The second phase is setting up a treatment plan. “This often includes managing what happens at school, for example, delaying academic tests,” says Dr. Benford. Finally, when the patient has recovered, the third part of treatment is setting a “return to learn/return to play” strategy. “I work with the trainers at all the high schools,” he says. “When the student athlete returns to play, we have a direct dialogue so he or she stays safe.”

Orthobiologics

Orthobiologics is an area of regenerative medicine designed to amplify natural healing,” explains Dr. Benford. “We can pinpoint treatments to specific areas of injury.” One type of treatment is called PRP (platelet rich plasma) Therapy. This treatment was in the news recently after it was reported Golden State Warrior center Andrew Bogut received platelet-rich plasma therapy as part of his rehab after a knee injury. “Platelets have many types of growth factors, and in this treatment a patient’s own platelets are injected into the injured are to help with healing,” says Dr. Benford. PRP therapy is used for muscle tears, tendon injuries, and chronic inflammation.

Precision Sports Medicine also offers stem cell therapy as a treatment option. “Stem cells promote healing and regeneration and can be used in muscles as well as articular joints, and for chronic conditions,” he explains. “Stem cells have growth factors as well but also have cells that can turn into any kind of tissue.” This is also an injection treatment in which the stem cells are injected directly into the injured or damaged area.

Muscloskeletal Ultrasound

The ultrasound machine at Precision Sports Medicine is located bedside and is used as an integral tool both for diagnosis and as a guide for orthobiologic therapies. “Using ultrasound when giving injections allows me to focus the therapy directly where needed,” he explains. He also points out that while an MRI shows a clear picture through a joint, “With ultrasound, we can take the patient through a full range of motion to see how muscles, tendons, and ligaments are functioning.”

Does he have any advice on how to prevent injury? “Don’t do too much at one time,” he warns. “That’s usually when injuries happen.”

Precision Sports Medicine is located within the Precision Wellness Center on Cabrillo’s main campus at 6500 Soquel Drive in Aptos. Call 831-295-5858 to make an appointment with Dr. Jacob Benford.