

The review of the Italian association of psycho-neuro-endocrine-immunology

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PNEI NEWS

The new knowledge of science and health

THE STRENGTH OF PSYCHE IN SPORT AND LIFE



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EDITORIAL

Page 3. The strength of psyche in sport and life.

A reflection about a summer of Olympic success

David Lazzari

INTERVIEW

Page 4. A manifest for a paradigm shift in medicine. We discuss about it with Luigi Fontana, researcher on aging and longevity and the first signatory.

Plos Medicine has published the work signed by Walter Willet and Alessio Fasano (Harvard University), Paolo Vineis (Imperial College, London), Yap Seng Chong (National University of Singapore) as well as Luigi Fontana (currently at Sidney University). After a ruthless analysis on the current effectiveness of prevention and pharmacological treatment, the researchers propose a line of action that we know very well: a paradigm shift based on diet, physical activity and stress management. A great news for our members and readers.

Paola Emilia Cicerone

SPORT AND HEALTH

Page 7. The future sport

The world of sport is brewing. We propose a wide-ranging reflection starting from the pandemic that forced us to rediscover the importance of motor activity and physical exercise.

Elena Campanini

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

Page 10. Shift work tolerance at the hospital

We present an investigation on psychobiological determinants of shift work tolerance: a correlation study on shift nurses working at Ancona Regional Hospital.

Andrea Minelli

Page 14. Some rules to make remote work a smart way of working rather than just teleworking.

The term “smart” means intelligent in the sense of “bright, quick in the uptake, crafty” nevertheless the so-called smart-working we have experienced is not smart at all. There is often a great confusion with words that is why it is important to distinguish between telework and smart-working. This distinction is also legally important. Remote work seen in this period often transposes the same logic that was used in the office for any activity performed at home behind a screen.

Pietro Bussotti

MEDICINE AND PHILOSOPHY

Page 17. Medicine and philosophy in ancient Islam.

The Taliban seizure of power in Afghanistan has dramatically brought back to the foreground the dominion of the Islamic religion over the social, cultural and political life of many nations. A

dominion whose long roots date back to the advent and spread of the Islamic religion which along the centuries has rejected every assault of secular and scientific culture. In this article we reconstruct the conflict between the Andalusian physician and philosopher Averroes and the ideas of the Sufi monk Al-Ghazali which ended in favour of the latter and in general of the Islamic practice of subjugating culture and behaviours to religious rules.

Francesco Bottaccioli

EDITORIAL

The strength of psyche in sport and life.

A reflection about a summer of Olympic success

David Lazzari

In this atmosphere resulting from a year and a half of pandemic, the sport performances had a great impact. It is true that attention to sport, especially soccer and Olympics is nothing new. Yet it is worth underlining those elements of novelty and peculiarities linked to this historical time. First of all, it became known the athletes' psychological aspects, both positive and negative. Many athletes did not hesitate to tell their difficulties and how important was the psychological support they received and the role it played and still plays in their activity, way of competing and team spirit.

To be underlined is not only the presence of different forms of distress lived by the athletes, after all they are human beings living among us and experiencing the same malaise caused by the long pandemic, what is worth observing is that they showed a different way of dealing with these issues. There is less shame to show one's own fragilities: probably it is clear for them that these aspects belong to life and must be faced as such and not seen as a sign of weakness.

These examples may help many people to have a more open and aware attitude towards themselves in order to find ways to deal with these issues. There is one more matter to consider. The role played by the psychological dimension in thoughts, emotions, one's own attitude while coping with one's commitment to sport and demanding situations such as competitions. In this sense sport (albeit its peculiarities) is a mirror of life in general. Even here it should be emphasized that the psychological component is not for building or intensifying a paroxysmal competitiveness but to reinforce awareness and resources to find a functional and individual balance in managing sport activity.

Stress management, required by now to all of us, is a fundamental part in sport; this means learning to be more humane and to be oneself.

The Paralympics highlighted a further aspect: the truly formidable results achieved by the Paralympic athletes. Once these possibilities seemed to be given just to very few individuals: those who were motivated by an extraordinary and rare strength (see Alex Zanardi). Nowadays we can see that there are plenty of these examples. It has been said that sport is one of the few "social elevators" allowing to bring up even the most disadvantaged individuals. Sport is also (if I may use this term) a "psychological elevator". It may teach to develop a positive and constructive strength of the psyche and show what it can produce, not only in terms of results but the way one faces problems and life in general. In life it is always fundamental to develop a positive strength and a constructive capability of psyche. Even more so after having gone through a

difficult time or trauma and it is then time to rebuild. The often mentioned “resilience” develops like this. Giving back strength to the psyche may enable us to get out of the tunnel, see the dawn after the darkest night, rediscover the meaning and the sense of future. Unfortunately, our society has not yet understood that it is not enough taking care of the body, promoting (rightly) physical activity. There is also the need to promote the resources of the psyche because the challenges have increased whereas the “natural” conditions of the psychological development have become more and more complex. Even if athletes can be regarded as heroes and extraordinary people, let us avoid to turn them into aliens. Their example is good for all of us. During the Paralympics, compassion for the “human case” has at last turned into admiration for the shown engagement, for having started at a disadvantaged circumstance not only to compete but also to “exist” fully as human beings. Beyond medals, this is the greatest victory which one achieves on the “roads of life”.