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Article Citation:

Leamor Kahanov, Tarah Daly (2009) Bilateral Pulmonary Emboli in a Collegiate Gymnast: A Case Report. *Journal of Athletic Training*: November 2009, Vol. 44, No. 6, pp. 666-671.

doi: 10.4085/1062-6050-44.6.666

Case Reports

Bilateral Pulmonary Emboli in a Collegiate Gymnast: A Case Report

Leamor Kahanov, EdD ATC and Tarah Daly, MS

Indiana State University, Terre Haute, IN

Abstract

Objective: To characterize the diagnosis of pulmonary embolism in collegiate student-athletes and to raise awareness among sports medicine providers of the possibility of this potentially fatal disease in the student-athlete population.

Background: An 18-year-old, previously healthy National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I female gymnast complained of intense pain, bilaterally, deep in her chest. The athlete was referred to her team physician, who identified normal vital signs but referred her to the emergency room because of significant pain. The student-athlete was diagnosed with bilateral pulmonary emboli in the emergency room.

Differential Diagnosis: Pneumonia, renal calculi, upper urinary tract infection, intercostal muscle strain or rib fracture, pancreatitis, gall bladder disease, gastritis, ulceration, esophagitis, infection, tumor, pulmonary embolism.

Treatment: The student-athlete was immediately placed on anticoagulants for 6 months. During that time, she was unable to participate in gymnastics and was limited to light conditioning.

Uniqueness: Documented cases of female student-athletes developing a pulmonary embolism are lacking in the literature. Two cases of pulmonary embolism in male high school student-athletes have been documented, in addition to many cases in elderly and sedentary populations.

Conclusions: All health care providers, including sports medicine professionals, should be aware that this condition may be present among student-athletes. During the initial evaluation, prescreening should include questions about any previous or family history of pulmonary embolism or other blood clots. Athletes who answer positively to these questions may have a higher likelihood of pulmonary embolism and should be referred for testing.

Keywords: [cardiovascular diseases](#), [vascular diseases](#)

Leamor Kahanov, EdD, ATC, and Tarah Daly, MS, contributed to conception and design, analysis and interpretation of the data, and drafting, critical revision, and

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(November 2009)

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Journal Information

Print ISSN 1062-6050

eISSN 1938-162X

Frequency Bimonthly:

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May/June
July/August
September/October
November/December

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Address correspondence to Leamor Kahanov, EdD, ATC, Indiana State University,
Athletic Training Department, C-06, Terre Haute, IN 47809. Address e-mail to
leamor.kahanov@indstate.edu

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