

Transcript Details

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Advances in Sports Cardiology: Updates from ACC 2026

Announcer:

Welcome to *Heart Matters* on ReachMD. On this episode, we'll hear from Dr. Jeffrey Hsu, who's a Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. He'll be sharing advances in sports cardiology, which he also discussed at the 2026 American College of Cardiology Scientific Sessions. Here's Dr. Hsu now.

Dr. Hsu:

If I were to describe the field of sports cardiology in recent years in one word, I think it would be "blossoming." I think it's grown incredibly over this last decade, and especially over these last few years. In 2025, the AHA and ACC published our latest set of guidelines in sports cardiology, and I would consider this a landmark publication because these guidelines are only published once every 10 years or so, and this latest set of guidelines really has moved the field forward.

On top of that, this year, at the ACC Scientific Sessions, this will be the first year we have a sports cardiology pre-conference before the scientific sessions. This builds on the success of the sports cardiology section within ACC over the last several years. We've previously had a standalone conference at Heart House where we spent two and a half days discussing sports cardiology topics. But this is the first year we can really reach the audience that attends scientific sessions.

So how has the field blossomed? How has it evolved? First, there are many more sports cardiology programs that have appeared across the country and the world. I think that this is due to growing recognition of the unique needs of athletes who are at risk of cardiac conditions and who do have diagnosed cardiac conditions. With the growth of these programs, we're seeing growing interest in the field. More trainees these days are interested in learning how to become a sports cardiologist and how to integrate it into their training.

Secondly, I think that the attention on sports cardiology, like it has been previously, continues to be related to these high-profile events that have occurred in the sporting world. Over the last few years, we've had live footage of athletes experiencing sudden cardiac arrest. And fortunately, these athletes have survived their cardiac arrest events. I think this is definitely due largely in part to the increased recognition of how to respond to these cardiac arrests. After these events, though, it does tend to raise interest in how we can respond to these events more effectively—but also, what can we do to prevent these cardiac arrest events from occurring? So I think that this generates a lot of interest in the broader community, both medical and non-medical, for how to really protect our athletes during sport and exercise.

Additionally, more interest has grown in sports cardiology because of increased recognition of cardiac issues that do affect athletes. One thing that we've come to learn over the last several years is that there are populations of athletes that we've identified to be at increased risk of developing cardiac issues. Namely, these are coronary artery disease as well as atrial fibrillation in older endurance athletes.

These studies are generating a lot of interest in the athlete community and do prompt a lot of people to seek cardiology care to discuss these conditions and these issues—both how to prevent them if possible, but also, how to manage them once they're diagnosed.

And lastly, I think in the current era of medicine, we have more and better tools to understand risk of cardiac disease during exercise. We do have better imaging techniques these days, and also the growth of genetic testing and the use of polygenic risk scores to better stratify risk in both athletes and non-athletes.

So I think for all these reasons, there has been tremendous growth in attention to cardiovascular health in athletes, and we're really excited to discuss these in a lot more detail at the ACC Care of the Athletic Heart pre-conference this year.

Announcer:

That was Dr. Jeffrey Hsu sharing updates in sports cardiology. To access this and other episodes in our series, visit *Heart Matters* on ReachMD.com, where you can Be Part of the Knowledge. Thanks for listening!