



Photo credit: UConn Athletics

UConn Health: Providing Expert Care to Champion Athletes and the Community

By STEVEN BLACKBURN

After playing in school sports themselves, it was destiny for Dr. Robert A. Arciero and Dr. Katherine Coyner to treat Husky athletes as part of the sports medicine program within UConn Health's Department of Orthopedic Surgery.

UConn Health has established itself as a leader in exceptional health care, where the expert care provided to champion athletes extends to the general population. With the backdrop of their association with UConn basketball national champions, UConn Health is making waves in delivering top-notch care that inspires confidence in the community.

The story begins with UConn Health's



Katherine Coyner, M.D., at Gampel Pavilion before a women's basketball game on Jan. 27, 2018. Photo by Peter Morenus/UConn.

renowned sports medicine program, where clinicians have been entrusted with the health and well-being of elite athletes who have achieved remarkable success on a national level. The program has become synonymous with excellence, catering to the needs of champions in their pursuit of greatness.

In the world of sports medicine, there are exceptional individuals who go above and beyond to ensure athletes receive the best care possible. Drs. Arciero and Coyner exemplify this commitment, using their own experiences as former athletes to treat and empower the Husky athletes under their care.

Dr. Coyner's journey to becoming an orthopedic surgeon was fueled by her deep passion for sports as a former Division I college basketball player at UMass Amherst.



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UConn Athletics Medical Director Deena Casiero, M.D., and UConn Health Sports Medicine Division Chief and Team Physician Robert Arciero, M.D., courtside at the NCAA championship, April 1, 2023. Photo courtesy of Robert Arciero.



Katherine Coyner, M.D. (left), an orthopedic surgeon, works with a patient at the UConn Musculoskeletal Institute at UConn Health in Farmington on Feb. 7, 2018. Photo by Stan Godlewski for UConn Health.

With a 360-degree view of athletics, she knew from high school that fixing people's injuries would be her calling. Driven by the desire to bring joy to athletes, weekend warriors and grandmothers seeking a better quality of life, she found her purpose in orthopedic surgery. Her unwavering dedication to helping patients and her love for all things sports make her an exceptional asset to the UConn Health team.

Similarly, Dr. Arciero's path to sports medicine began with a personal sports injury that redirected his career aspirations. Though his dream of becoming a professional baseball player was derailed, he found solace in caring for athletes.

"I thought that if I couldn't join them, maybe I could take care of them," Dr. Arciero said. Inspired by the opportunity to make a difference, he transitioned from the military to sports medicine and became an integral part of UConn Health. Today, as the chief of the Orthopedic Surgery Department's sports medicine program and director of the Sports Medicine Fellowship program, he oversees the well-being of over 700 Division 1 athletes.

The impact of Drs. Arciero and Coyner's work extends far beyond the

realm of athletics. While providing exceptional care for UConn athletes, they also devote 90% of their time to serving the Farmington Valley community and the entire state of Connecticut.

Injuries don't discriminate between athletes and non-athletes, and the same high-quality care is delivered to all. By treating everyone as invaluable individuals, regardless of their role on the field or in their everyday lives, they exemplify the ethos of UConn Health, Dr. Coyner said. "Regardless of whether they are elite athletes or everyday individuals, injuries like ACL tears affect basketball players and weekend warriors alike. Shoulder dislocations can occur in both football players and manual laborers. While the stakes may vary for athletes, particularly if they are the most valuable player in their sport, we approach every patient as if they are the most valuable individuals in their respective fields because they truly are."

UConn Health's emphasis on individualized care is at the heart of its approach. Their team of skilled and compassionate medical professionals understands that each patient is unique and deserves personalized attention.

By leveraging their experience with elite athletes, they have developed innovative treatments and techniques that are now made accessible to all, ensuring that every patient receives the care they deserve.

UConn Health ensures a legacy of exceptional care by training future medical doctors in sports medicine. After completing their residency, doctors may participate in a specialized sports medicine fellowship, gaining hands-on experience in sideline coverage, acute diagnoses and surgical planning.

Dr. Coyner values the fellowship's emphasis on skill development and effective communication within the sports medicine team. This approach allows for mentorship opportunities and comprehensive support beyond surgical procedures.

Dr. Coyner also leads outreach programs, such as Inspiring Women in Engineering and Medicine, aimed at exposing high school women to male-dominated fields like orthopedics. By diversifying the field, UConn Health aims to make a lasting impact.

UConn Health's commitment to training future doctors and promoting diversity is integral to its mission. By nurturing talent and inspiring young women, UConn Health contributes to the Huskies' success and the community's well-being.

The impact of UConn Health's exceptional care is evident in the lives of countless individuals who have sought their expertise. From successful recoveries to life-changing interventions, the stories of triumph and hope are a testament to the remarkable work being done at UConn Health.

"When an athlete says, 'Thank you, doc,' it's a very substantial reward, knowing that you literally had a hand in them getting back into the game and being successful," Dr. Arciero said. ■



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Learn more about UConn Health Orthopedics & Sports Medicine at h.uconn.edu/osm.

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