

A Unique Career Uniquely Lived

Professor Arne Ljungqvist

Few people have the opportunity during their lives to see a major societal problem, have the determination and ability to work tirelessly to bring about major social change, and do it with such deep wisdom and fairness. Few are fortunate enough to leave indelible footprints on the human path, not necessarily by putting an end to profound human social problems but rather by inventing and implementing structures and mechanisms to blunt such problems and to show the way forward and find resonance and inspire and catalyze others to act. The lucky few are effective enough to see the fruits of their commitment and indomitable efforts and to experience the effects of their tenacity on human activity. What separates the ordinary from the extraordinarily?

In all probability, Arne Ljungqvist did not foresee an extraordinary future for himself when he pursued his devotion to the beauty of sport. Like most great athletes, he was testing himself and pushing his limits of his own physical excellence. And find physical excellence he did!

Few of us succeed in our dreams of becoming national sports champions and Olympic athletes! But no doubt, it was an altruistic and noble drive to understand human disease and to relieve human suffering that drove Arne Ljungqvist into a career in medicine, a field in which he came to play such a decisive role in advancing medical research and education in Sweden through his work as a scientist, prorektor, vice dean of the medical faculty, and chair of the Pathology and Cytology Department of the Karolinska Institute and the Karolinska Hospital, thereby helping make Swedish biomedicine one of the world's greatest scientific and educational biomedical institutions. But it was not until these two separate passions merged together in Arne's world that produced the structure that was to make him the world's most uniquely powerful and influential force combating the scourge of doping in sport.

Long before others in the world of sport and sport medicine, Arne Ljungqvist understood that the dishonesty of sport doping was creating far more damage than merely harming individual athletes and endangering their access to fair and clean competition and their opportunity for success. He realized that illicit use of performance-enhancing agents is a vast, broad, public health danger, exposing immature and growing young bodies to the health damages caused by the physiologically inappropriate use of powerful drugs, enticing them with the implicit approval and promises of success from their sport idols and heroes.

By Theodore Friedmann, MD

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The urge to battle doping as a public health issue could have arisen only in someone with Arne Ljungqvist's background and devotion not only to the glory of clean sport, but also who had the training and passion for medicine, science, and education. And so he used his influence through the IAAF, the IOC Medical Commission, WADA, and more recently through his newly established Arne Ljungqvist Foundation to promote the urgent need for a public health approach to the recognition and control of illicit drug use, not only in elite sport but in all sectors of our society.

An astounding demonstration of this obsession with the public health importance of the fight against doping came with the publication of his report, written with colleagues, to the World Health Organization entitled, "The Health Legacy of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games," a report that documented major benefits of the Beijing Games to Chinese life and health, benefits that grew directly out of the teachings and urgings of Arne Ljungqvist. While the public health benefits have been impressive, they are early and will require continuing and increasing devotion. It is this task that the Arne Ljungqvist Foundation is devoted to continuing.

One of the most impressive examples of Arne Ljungqvist's multidisciplinary insight and his ability to move quickly to counteract the constantly evolving threat of doping came through his realization more than a decade ago that

completely new forms of doping and doping detection were emerging through the remarkable revolution in medical genetics and through genetic approaches to understand and treat human disease. This brilliant insight was made possible by his unique position straddling the worlds of sport, medicine, and research; his central role in the establishment of WADA; and his rapid organization of the research program at WADA that he insisted should include programs aimed not only to improve direct physicochemical detection of doping agents, but also to an examination of the potential for gene-based doping and the application of genetic tools to identify "genetic signatures" of exposure to doping agents or methods. Recent progress in the WADA research program has made impressive progress toward identification of such genetic signatures and promises in the very near future to add revolutionary new detection tools to the fight against doping.

All of this progress is a powerful testimonial to the foresight, courage, medical, and scientific rigor of Arne Ljungqvist. Our society in general and the world of sport in particular are deeply indebted to him. No single person has done more to battle the deceitful, venal, and intellectually dishonest forces at work in modern sport.

Tack så mycket, Arne Ljungqvist!