



THE ROLE OF THE MEDICAL PRACTITIONER IN COMBAT SPORT IN NSW

INTRODUCTION TO COMBAT SPORTS IN NSW

The *Combat Sports Act 2013* provides the legislative framework that regulates the conduct of combat sport contests in NSW. The Combat Sports Authority of NSW (CSA) is responsible for the regulation of all combat sport contests. Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia have bodies similar to the Combat Sports Authority of NSW that undertake the regulation of combat sport contests in those states.

WHAT IS A COMBAT SPORT CONTEST?

In NSW a combat sport contest means:

a contest, display or exhibition of combat sport:

- to which the public are admitted on payment of a fee, or
- arranged or held on a for profit basis, or
- that is held on premises licensed under the *Liquor Act 2007* or the *Casino Control Act 1992*, or
- where at least one of the combatants is competing for a monetary prize or other valuable reward, or
- that is prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of this definition,

but does not include a contest, display or exhibition excluded from this definition by the regulations.

REQUIREMENT FOR MEDICAL PRACTITIONER TO BE IN ATTENDANCE

In NSW, it is a requirement that a Medical Practitioner is in attendance at every combat sport contest covered by the legislation.

It is the responsibility of the Promoter to ensure that a Medical Practitioner is in attendance before, during and after the contest for the purposes of exercising the functions of an attending Medical Practitioner.

It is the responsibility of the Promoter of a contest to engage a registered Medical Practitioner to be in attendance.

The *Act* sets out the functions required of the Medical Practitioner and this fact sheet summarises the key activities and provides useful background information for the Medical Practitioner.

AUTHORITY TO STOP A CONTEST

The Medical Practitioner engaged for the contest has the power and authority to stop a contest.

MEDICAL ASSESSMENTS REQUIRED FOR COMBATANT REGISTRATION

A combatant means a person who engages or proposes to engage as a contestant in a combat sport contest. Combatants that reside in NSW must register with the Combat Sports Authority (CSA). Their registration is for 3 years.

Two medical certificates are required for all combatants seeking registration. These certificates are:

- a Certificate of Fitness
- a Serological Clearance.

All combatants approved to compete at a contest will have met the requirements for obtaining and/or retaining both the certificate of fitness and serological clearance.

Certificate of Fitness

A Certificate of Fitness is required annually for each combatant who is actively competing. The Certificate must be issued by a Medical Practitioner on the approved form and submitted by the combatant to the CSA. A template for a Certificate of Fitness is attached for your information (**Appendix A**).

Serological Clearance

A **serological clearance** is a Certificate issued by a registered Medical Practitioner or a person who provides a pathology service. The Certificate certifies that:

- (a) the Medical Practitioner or person is of the opinion that a specified person is not capable of transmitting a medical condition or disease specified by the regulations
- and
- (b) the opinion is based on the results of blood tests or other tests carried out on a date specified in the Certificate.

The medical conditions or diseases specified by the regulations are:

- HIV
- Hepatitis B
- Hepatitis C.

In order to complete the Serology Clearance the Medical Practitioner must order the following tests to be conducted:

- HIV antibody (HIV ab),
- Hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg),
- Hepatitis C antibody (HCV ab).

The certificate must state the date of the test and may only be completed if based on the results of the above tests, the issuer is of the opinion that the person is not capable of transmitting any of the specified diseases.

The Combat Sports Authority of NSW does not require the results of the pathology report to be attached. A template for a Serological Clearance (Certificate) is attached for your information (**Appendix B**).

WEIGH-IN OF COMBATANTS

The weigh-in is an official event to establish that each combatant is in the weight class set for the contest. The weigh-in generally occurs at a set time in the 24 hours prior to the contest and is often held at a separate venue.

The Medical Practitioner may attend the weigh-in to conduct preliminary examination of combatants, however this is not compulsory.

MEDICAL RECORD BOOK (MRB)

Upon first registration, each combatant is issued with a

Medical Record Book (MRB). Combat Sports Authorities in other jurisdictions also issue contestants with record books.

This book is a very important tool in the regulation of combat sports as it records the issuance of the relevant certificates and all medical suspensions imposed. It contains important information for Medical Practitioners and should be consulted each time a combatant is examined.

It is a requirement of the *Combat Sports Act 2013* that Medical Practitioners endorse the MRB both before each contest to confirm the combatant is fit to fight and after every contest to note any medical suspension imposed.

In addition to the endorsement of the MRB, the Medical Practitioner must complete a pre-fight medical report and a post-fight medical report for each combatant. More information relating to this follows.

AT THE CONTEST

Before the Contest begins

Before the start of the first contest is a busy time for the Medical Practitioner. It is preferable that the Medical Practitioner is at the venue at least 1 hour prior to the commencement of the first bout.

Key tasks to be completed before the first contest include:

- Check that medical equipment is at ringside (including the stretcher)
- Identify and set up the medical area to handle any trauma resulting from a contest
- Discuss with the referees and combat sport inspectors how communication will take place during a bout and how each will fulfil their responsibilities. This should include establishing a chain of command
- Complete pre-contest examinations (see below).

Pre-contest examinations

- An examination of each combatant sufficient to determine whether the combatant is fit to fight must be conducted by the Medical Practitioner.
- The Medical Practitioner must complete the approved form “pre-contest medical examination” (see **Appendix C**) for each combatant.

- The combatant’s Medical Record Book must be completed under the section “pre-contest medical” (see **Appendix D**) and the Medical Practitioner must state that in their opinion the combatant is “fit to fight” in the proposed contest if it is to occur.

The Medical Practitioner may declare a contestant to be unfit to compete in a contest because of any condition that would render the contestant more likely than usual to suffer injury in the normal course of any contest, or be less able to adequately defend themselves. This can include (but is not limited to):

- Any sign of use of a prohibited substance or alcohol
- A recent fracture or cut
- An acute illness
- A skin disease

or any other condition that in the opinion of the Medical Practitioner would be detrimental to the combatant or their opponent or the contest in general.

During the contest

- The Medical Practitioner must be present during and after the contest for every contest, preferably seated ringside. If the Medical Practitioner is not at ringside the contest may not commence and if the Medical Practitioner leaves ringside, any contest in progress must cease.
- Between rounds, the Medical Practitioner may observe a combatant from close quarters to assess the extent of an injury.
- The Medical Practitioner must direct the referee to stop the contest (if the referee has not already done so) if, in their opinion the combatant is exhausted or injured to such an extent they are unable to defend themselves or continue the contest.
- The Medical Practitioner must observe the combatants during the contest and render medical assistance if required.

When to Stop a Fight

- Combatant health is at risk (eg. too many hard hits to the head, loss of balance, unable to defend themselves)
- Exhaustion

- Cut eyes – Decisions regarding assessment are made on clinical grounds including possible damage to an eye and its surrounds if the fight continues. All cuts are individually assessed. A combatant may have two or three cuts of no clinical significance or affecting the combatant’s performance and the bout may continue whereas in some cases a single cut may be in a position necessitating the immediate cessation of a bout such as if the cut is bleeding into the eye and reducing the vision of the combatant.

The Medical Practitioner having caused the contest to be stopped (or if the referee has declared the contest to be ended), may enter the ring to render assistance to a combatant.

After the contest

Post-contest examinations

- Immediately following the contest the Medical Practitioner must complete an examination of each combatant and complete the approved form “post-contest medical examination” (see **Appendix E**) and determine the period (if any) of medical suspension to be imposed on the combatant utilising the minimum recommended suspension, observations of the contest and information available in the Medical Record Book.
- If any suspension is to be enforced this must be noted on the post contest medical examination form and in the combatant’s Medical Record Book in the post contest section (see **Appendix D**).

The wellbeing of a combatant requiring the assistance of the Medical Practitioner takes precedence over commencing the next contest in all cases.

MEDICAL SUSPENSIONS

All Australian Authorities responsible for the regulation of combat sports will support and apply medical suspensions. In NSW, all medical suspensions apply to both contests and sparring.

The Combat Sports Authority of NSW has determined minimum recommended medical suspensions for combatants who have sustained a head injury or been knocked out. Please note the Medical Practitioner can recommend a longer period of suspension if in their opinion it is required.

The following minimum medical suspensions should be applied

| RESULT | |
|--|--|
| Any period of unconsciousness or injury requiring the fight to be stopped because fighter was unable to continue (not including tap-out or submissions in MMA) | 30 days |
| Knock-out or TKO (head injury) | 30 days |
| Second (2 nd) consecutive loss by knockout or TKO (head injury) | 60 days |
| Third (3 rd) consecutive loss by knockout or TKO (head injury) | 90 days <u>PLUS</u> Registration suspended until a full medical examination (possibly including an MRI) has been conducted and the Medical Practitioner has determined that the combatant is fit to fight. |
| Six consecutive losses (regardless of the manner of loss) | Registration suspended until a full medical examination (possibly including an MRI) has been conducted and the Medical Practitioner has determined that the combatant is fit to fight. |

For non-head related injuries the Medical Practitioner may apply a medical suspension for any period as they see fit.

A Medical Practitioner may also determine that the combatant must undertake additional tests before the medical suspension is lifted. **This information must be included in both the combatant’s Medical Record Book and on the post contest medical form.**

REPORTING

The reports of the Medical Practitioner are important documents in the records of a contest. The following documents are retained by the CSA:

- Pre-contest medical examination
- Post contest medical examination
- Injury report form.

All these documents must be returned to the Combat Sport Inspector at the conclusion of the contest.

EQUIPMENT

The Promoter must provide a stretcher. The Medical Practitioner should know the location of the stretcher before the contest commences. It is recommended for all contests that the stretcher is located under the ring in the red corner, however logistics and layout may prevent this on occasion.

Required equipment

- Basic doctor’s bag kit
- Stretcher
- Disposable gloves
- Gauze swabs

Recommended equipment

- Oxyviva / oxygen delivery system

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Approved form – Certificate of Fitness

Appendix B: Approved Form – Serological Clearance

Appendix C: Approved Form – Pre-contest medical examination

Appendix D: Medical Record Book (sample page) – Pre-contest fit to fight declaration

Medical Record Book – Post contest declaration and medical suspension

Appendix E: Approved form – Post-contest medical examination

Appendix F: Post fight – Injury Report Form