

Blog

My Experience Providing Medical Care at a NASCAR Race

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By Cameron McCaig, MD

I love being an emergency physician and I love motorsports. I never expected to combine two of my passions.

AMR was recently named the official emergency medical services partner of NASCAR. AMR now provides on-track safety teams to respond to incidents during all NASCAR race weekends. Through the partnership, Envision Healthcare clinicians provide initial assessment, treatment and transfer services trackside, as needed, in the event of a crash.



I recently had the opportunity to serve as a track physician on February 18 and 19 during the time trials and races leading up to the Daytona 500. It was an incredible experience that allowed me to cross another item off my bucket list!

After a thorough orientation to the track and the medical team's responsibilities, I was paired up with two AMR paramedics in a chase truck and was given a helmet and fire suit like the drivers wear. While there was a lot of downtime during the two days of racing, it was exciting just to hear the sound of the cars' engines as they hit the banking in each turn.

NASCAR has committed to a focus on evaluation and management of concussion. A newly revised consensus approach to managing concussion was rolled out at the Daytona 500 race. The organization has committed to having an experienced provider available on the track at all times, and every driver who is in a crash must be examined by a physician. When there was a crash on the track, we were immediately deployed to the scene, sometimes even as the cars were still skidding.

There were a few minor crashes during the day, and a large nine-car crash Saturday night during the Clash, a non-NASCAR racing event. During the time trials on Sunday, we responded to incidents involving drivers Kurt Busch and Jimmie Johnson, who has won a record-tying seven championship titles in the sport. When Johnson dropped the netting down in the window of his car, the signal to medical staff that he was OK, I truly understood the importance of having trained medical staff on track; this can be a very dangerous sport.

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Since this is a new partnership, I didn't know what to expect. I was part-medical doctor, part-fan and part-awestruck student. I give a lot of credit to the fire rescue personnel who graciously took us under their wings and showed us the ropes. It was fascinating to watch the scope of the operation, and the AMR and NASCAR teams were very supportive.

As a member of Envision Healthcare's physician travel team, I am credentialed in 10 states, so I'm hoping I'll be able to provide my services at the Brickyard 400 in Indianapolis!

Cameron McCaig, MD, is an emergency physician with Envision Healthcare's physician travel team. He has been with the company for five years.

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