Assessing Differences in Eating Disorder Behaviors in Collegiate Female Athletes using the FAST, EAT-26 and BEDA-Q Questionnaires

Hannah Contrucci, Dietetic Intern and Graduate Student, Nutrition Program, UNM
Deborah Cohen, DCN, RDN, Associate Professor, Nutrition and Dietetics Program, UNM

Background

Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport (RED-S) is an energy deficiency syndrome commonly seen in female athletes that can cause nutrient deficiencies, osteoporosis, chronic fatigue, anemia, and increased risk for infections. Many female athletes who suffer from RED-S also suffer from an eating disorder, often undiagnosed. The need for early screening and diagnosis of an eating disorder has been recognized, but a validated screening tool for use outside a controlled study environment and with collegiate athletes is not currently available. The Female Athlete Screening Tool (FAST)\(^2\), Eating Attitudes Test (EAT-26)\(^3\) and the Brief Eating Disorder in Athletes Questionnaire (BEDA-Q)\(^4\) are three screening tools that will be utilized and compared to assess differences in score and eating disorder behaviors and potentially prevent the development of RED-S and identify the need for further assessment.

Research Question

When the FAST, EAT-26 and BEDA-Q questionnaires are administered to collegiate female endurance athletes (ages 18-22) who exercise for 90 minutes or more 4 times per week, what are the differences in screening for eating disorder behaviors amongst the three different questionnaires?

Proposed Methods

Population

- Female endurance athletes playing a Division I sport at the University of New Mexico

Recruitment

- Flyers in UNM athletic training facilities
- In-person recruitment for each sports team

Screening for Eligibility

- UNM Opinio survey sent via email will be used for screening

Consent and Data Collection

- Consent will be obtained once eligible participants click on the survey in the email invitation. All elements of consent are included in the email.
- Athletes will meet with the student investigator a total of 4 times over the course of the study to:
  - Obtain demographics
  - Obtain height, weight, and BMI
  - Measure body fat using skinfold calipers
  - Complete questionnaires (FAST, EAT-26, BEDA-Q)

Data Storage

- All data collected will be securely stored on either a University computer or on paper in a locked cabinet in the PI’s office.

Potential Implications

Early screening for an ED protects the physical and psychological health of the athlete. This research will help both college coaches and RDN’s determine which questionnaire is the best to use to quickly screen an athlete for an eating disorder and potentially prevent the development of RED-S.

References