

Abstract

Coaches' nutrition knowledge and subsequent nutrition recommendations have an impact on athletes' health. This study's purpose was to determine Canadian varsity coaches' nutrition knowledge and their nutrition recommendation practices. In addition the present study sought to determine if a coaches' nutrition knowledge impacts whether he/she makes nutrition recommendations to his/her athletes. Coaches' accessibility to dietitians was also examined, in order to determine if and how dietitians can be incorporated into the Canadian varsity sport system. Coaches (n=5) completed a nutrition knowledge questionnaire and a semi-structured interview pertaining to their nutrition, hydration and supplementation recommendation practices. The semi-structured interview also examined coaches' weight management recommendations to athletes and their experiences with athletes who exhibit disordered eating symptoms as well as accessibility of dietitians. Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis. Results showed a low nutrition knowledge and that all (n=5) coaches make nutrition recommendations to their athletes. Coaches made recommendations in hydration, supplementation and weight management sections that were potentially detrimental to the health of athletes. In addition, recommendations in the hydration, training diet, pre-competition, recovery, supplementation, and weight management sections had potentially negative performance consequences to the athlete. Roles outlined for dietitians include team presentations, handouts on popular nutrition issues, one-on-one meetings with athletes and coaches who have specific concerns, policy development, advocating on the behalf of athletes with disordered eating symptoms, and interactions with meal hall staff to improve food services

to athletes. Further research should be conducted with a larger sample size of coaches and/or determine the effects of dietitian involvement in Canadian varsity sports.