Evaluation of Sports Nutrition Knowledge in Elite Level Sri Lankan Athletes

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Nutrition is a factor in sports performance, injury prevention, and maintaining the health status of athletes. Nutritional knowledge (NK) has the potential to affect eating patterns and improve an athlete's performance. Despite the importance of NK, the level of sports nutrition knowledge (SNK) of Sri Lankan elite-level athletes has not been evaluated. Therefore, this study aimed to evaluate the current level of SNK among Sri Lankan elite-level athletes. This study was conducted quantitatively, and a cross-sectional questionnaire was used to evaluate the SNK. A total of one hundred and fifty (n = 150) elite-level athletes were recruited for a survey using a stratified, purposive sampling method. The study participants were from nine different sports, including track and field (n = 30), netball (n = 10), volleyball (n = 20), karate (n = 20), weightlifting (n = 16), taekwondo (n = 14), football (n = 20), table tennis (n = 10), and badminton (n = 10). The collected data were analyzed by descriptive statistics, means and one-sample t-test. Athletes with an overall score of at least 46 out of 60 for the questionnaire that indicate they have higher knowledge about sports nutrition. In this study, the mean score on the SNK test was 34.76±2.47. According to this study, NK scores indicated that the differences between the means of the different sports were statistically significant ($p<0.05$). These results suggested that inadequate SNK among elite-level Sri Lankan athletes varied according to their sport. Athletes should have a good understanding of nutrition in order to maintain the necessary levels of health, body composition, and sports performance. Moreover, coaches also must have adequate knowledge of sports nutrition to guide athletes. Future research should concentrate on evaluating the impact of nutrition education interventions for athletes and coaches.

Keywords: Elite Athletes, Nutrition, Nutrition Knowledge