

Development of a Validated Nutrition Screening Questionnaire for Elite Athletes

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Objective: To understand the barriers influencing the dietary of elite level athletes. **Design:** Focus group discussions with athletes, coaches and sports dietitians who participate or work at the elite level. **Setting:** The New South Wales Institute of Sport for athletes, coaches and some sports dietitians, sports dietitians were also recruited from other Australian state institutes/academies of sport. **Participants:** Sixteen male and 30 female athletes from the New South Wales Institute of sport, representing diving, netball, basketball and lawn bowls. Twelve coaches representing swimming, diving, soccer, sailing, cycling and golf. Sixteen sports dietitians who consulted to state institutes/academies of sport with various sports. **Phenomenon of Interest:** Barriers influencing the diet and nutrient intake of elite athletes. **Analysis:** Focus groups were audio-taped and transcribed with in-depth notes also recorded during the groups. Thematic coding of transcripts and notes was undertaken by the primary coder and these themes were subsequently evaluated by the research team. **Results:** A number of barriers to healthy eating were described. Lack of time for food preparation was a significant barrier raised by all groups. Additionally, financial limitations, inadequate cooking skills and difficulty with living arrangements also rated high amongst all three groups. Coaches were concerned with excess body weight and body fat levels and perceived impact on sports performance. Athletes reported concern about body shape due to societal pressures. Sports dietitians and coaches were concerned with issues relating to optimal dietary provision surrounding travel to and from training and competition. Supplements were of low interest to this group of athletes. However coaches reported confusion due to marketing of supplements and sports foods and sports dietitians expressed concern about appropriate use of supplements. **Conclusions and Implications:** A wide range of barriers influence the diet of athletes. Health professionals working with this group need to be aware of these barriers when assessing nutritional intake, or designing nutrition interventions