Knowledge, Attitudes, and Beliefs of Youth Sport Coaches Regarding Sport Volume Recommendations and Sport Specialization

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Background

• Previous research has identified sport volume recommendations related to months per year, hours per week, and simultaneous participation in multiple leagues in order to reduce the risk of overuse injury (1,2).
• Coaches have been shown to be the primary influence on a youth athlete’s decision to perform intense training or specialize in a single sport.
• Therefore, identifying coaches’ baseline beliefs and perceptions is important for developing strategies to educate coaches about safe sport participation.

Objectives

1. To evaluate the knowledge of youth sport coaches towards current sport volume recommendations.
2. To describe the attitudes and beliefs of youth sport coaches towards sport specialization.

Subjects

• A total of 367 coaches started the questionnaire, and 253 coaches (207 males) from 16 different sports fully completed the questionnaire and were used for analysis (68.9% completion rate).
• Eligible participants were required to serve as a head or assistant coach of a youth sport team in the ages of 12 and 18.

Methods

• Youth sport coaches were invited via email to complete an anonymous Internet-based questionnaire regarding knowledge of sport volume recommendations and attitudes and beliefs regarding sport specialization.
• Questions were developed utilizing the feedback of a panel of content-area experts and the University of Wisconsin Survey Laboratory.
• The questionnaire consisted of demographics and team information, knowledge of sport volume recommendations, and attitudes and beliefs regarding sport specialization.
• Data was summarized using frequencies and proportions (%).

Results

Figure 1. How concerned are you about the risk of injury in youth sports?

Not at all concerned: 4.8%, A little concerned: 19.4%, Somewhat concerned: 32.5%, Very concerned: 32.1%, Extremely concerned: 11.1%

Figure 2. How much of a problem is early specialization in youth sports?

Not at all: 2.0%, A little: 8.7%, Somewhat: 18.8%, Quite a bit: 41.5%, A great deal: 29.2%

Figure 3. How much does participating in a single sport year-round increase the chances of a youth athlete getting an overuse injury?

Not at all: 2.8%, A little: 8.4%, Somewhat: 21.1%, Very: 41.0%, Extremely: 26.7%

Figure 4. How concerned are you about the behavior of parents?

Not at all concerned: 1.8%, A little concerned: 9.1%, Somewhat concerned: 16.0%, Very concerned: 31.2%, Extremely concerned: 43.1%

Table 1. Awareness of various sport volume recommendations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Frequency - YES (%)</th>
<th>Frequency - NO (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Months per year in single sport</td>
<td>52 (20.6%)</td>
<td>201 (79.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours per week in single sport</td>
<td>52 (20.6%)</td>
<td>201 (79.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in simultaneous leagues</td>
<td>56 (22.4%)</td>
<td>197 (77.6%)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

• Overall, awareness of general sport volume recommendations among youth sport coaches is low.
• However, youth sport coaches display a high level of concern regarding sport specialization and the consequences of year-round play.

Conclusions

• Sport volume recommendations need to be effectively disseminated to sport coaches as they are highly concerned but unaware of recommendations for reducing the risks of specialization.
• Medical organizations and health care providers involved in youth sports should consider developing educational materials and interventions regarding safe sport participation to properly educate youth coaches.

References


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