



The 13th European Nutrition Conference, FENS 2019, was held at the Dublin Convention Centre, 15–18 October 2019

Analysis of dietary habits and health status in a court of young athletes in Northern Italy practicing Athletic disciplines

Emanuela Cazzaniga¹, Annalisa Terenzio¹, Alessandra Pozzi¹, Alice Cassera¹, Andrea Greco², Antonina Orlando¹ and Paola Palestini¹

¹Department of Medicine and Surgery, University Milano-Bicocca, Monza, Italy and

²Department of Human and Social Sciences, University of Bergamo, Bergamo, Italy

Abstract

Introduction: A balanced diet is a fundamental component of athletes' health, training and performance. WHO dietary guidelines highlight the importance of maintaining a normal BMI, limiting the intake of sugars (especially sweetened foods and beverages), eating at least 5 portions of fruits and vegetables per day, drink lots of clean water (at least 2 L per day for children older than 13 and for adults). HBSC-Italy study reveals that children have frequently bad eating habits, such as consuming sweetened drinks and not enough fruits and vegetables. Indeed, 21.3% of Italian children are overweight and 9.3% are obese. The purpose of this study is to evaluate nutritional and health status of a population of Northern Italy children and adolescents practicing Athletics, investigating for both endurance and not endurance disciplines. Data obtained are a starting point for focused food education interventions aimed at improving health and sport performance.

Materials and Methods: A cohort of 125 athletes (12–25 years, 42.4% male, 57.6% female). Two groups were created: children (12–17 years) and adults (18–25 years). Weight, height, waist circumference, triceps and subscapularis skinfolds were measured in order to calculate BMI, Waist-to-Height ratio (WtHr), body adiposity and muscle mass. At baseline and after 1 year (follow-up) from a nutritional educational intervention, the anthropometric measures and dietary habits were tested with a validated dietary screening survey, considering food quality, portions and frequencies of consumption, were taken.

Results: At Baseline, more than 85% of athletes were found to be normal weight with WHtR < 0.5. All the athletes showed body adiposity in the normal range. Regarding food habits, most athletes do not take the recommended daily fruit and vegetable servings follow Italian trend. Only about 20% of children athletes assumes the water daily intake. On the contrary, about 50% of athletes in every group drink sweetened beverages every day. The data collection after the personalized food education meetings will be collected in May 2019.

Discussion: The athletes of cohort shows a good health status but nutritional habits present critical issue. For this reasons, there is a need of nutritional education for improving healthy eating habits in young athletes in order to impact positively on future health status and on sport performance.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest