THE NUTRITIONAL HABITS AND BEHAVIORS OF FEMALE COLLEGIATE ENDURANCE ATHLETES
Lavis JL, Kobylka DK, Hess RA: California University of Pennsylvania; California, PA

**Objective:** The purpose of this study was to determine the knowledge and nutritional habits of female endurance athletes. **Design and Settings:** A descriptive research design using a valid and reliable (r = .66-.71) questionnaire, The Revised Nutrition Knowledge Questionnaire, was used to collect data from subjects prior to practice. These questionnaires were distributed to NCAA Division II female endurance athletes participating in the sports of soccer, swimming, and cross country. An endurance athlete was defined by participation in aerobic activity at least 3 times a week for 30 minutes or more. The dependent variables were athlete’s knowledge about nutrition and eating habits. The independent variables were athlete’s year in school, and medical and/or professional nutritional counseling. **Subjects:** Twenty eight (N=28) female endurance athletes participated in the study with age ranging from 18-23 years. Ten freshman, 10 sophomores, 2 juniors, and 6 seniors volunteered with a response rate of 100%. **Measurement:** A Pearson-Product Moment Correlation (P < .05) was calculated for nutritional knowledge and eating habits, and the two independent variables, as well as other demographic information such as age, years of play, number of menstrual cycles, reported eating disorders, and any nutrition courses taken in school. **Results:** No correlation was found between athlete’s eating habits and knowledge about nutrition, and athlete’s year in school, or medical / professional nutritional counseling. Out of four classifications for knowledge of nutrition ranging from excellent to poor, all athlete’s scores fell into the good range, while athlete’s scores on eating habits fell into the midrange with very small standard deviations (7.43-4.54 respectively). **Conclusions:** These data reflect a homogeneous group of female athletes. While most studies have reviewed specific sport athletes compared to the general sampling of female athletes from multiple sports used in this study, similar results have been reported. Collectively, results indicate that knowledge of nutrition and eating habits may be independent of one another, and that collegiate female athletes may be well aware of their food choices as well as nutritional practices. Other factors such as time constraints, availability of food, cost, and societal influences need further review concerning athletes eating habits. **Key Words:** nutrition, behaviors, habits, dietary recommendations, endurance female athletes.