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HEALTH RELATED HABITS OF TABLE TENNIS COACHES

Sport coaches are part of the population that has its own specificities and because of their connection to athletes, especially young ones, their way of life deserves to be researched. As sports have a very important role in many nations worldwide, and even though for that the athletes take most of the credits the coaches are of great importance also, so their education in all fields would surely contribute to improvement of an athlete's performance.

The sample comprises 46 male table tennis coaches from different clubs in Croatia. For dietary habits, alcohol consumption and smoking habits determination, the new questionnaire was constructed based on previous national and international studies. To determine physical activity levels the Baecke questionnaire of habitual physical activity was used. The questionnaire was completed anonymously. The obtained data were analyzed by standard statistical procedures, with statistical software package SPSS 13.0.

According to the results it is obvious that dietary habits of the coaches are not on adequate level. Especially there is a problem in skipping the meals and eating fast food. Smoking is unfortunately widely accepted and though the campaign against smoking is going on in many countries the real results are still not apparent, and the number of deaths caused by cancer that could be connected with smoking is still very high. Concerning the smoking habits it was found that 34.6% of the table tennis coaches are smokers, although the majority of them stated that they are smoking between 5 and 10 cigarettes per day. 66% of coaches are consuming alcohol, mostly beer and wine. The levels of all examined dimensions of habitual physical activity were greater than in average Croatia male population.

Key words: health habits, table tennis, coaches, nutrition, smoking, alcohol

Introduction

World Health Organisation has already established the main factors influencing health those being socio-economic factors, way of life and physical environment (WHO, 2003). The risk factors in relation with the way of life are nutrition, physical inactivity, smoking, alcohol consumption and use of drugs.

Sports in general, as well as other professions that are in close relation with sport are usually presumed to be in connection with life quality especially regarding health. Most of the laics would conclude that people involved professionally in sport lead a healthy way of life, take care about their dietary habits and avoid most of the habits that would endanger the health. Sports coaches would be a typical example of a professional who should be well aware of the basis of healthy living. Though, this has never been scientifically proved and there is a great lack of published papers dealing with this issue. Sport coaches are part of the population that has its own specificities and because of their connection to athletes, especially young ones, their way of life deserves to be researched. As sports have a very important role in many nations worldwide, and even though for that the athletes take most of the credits the coaches are of great importance also, so their education in all fields would surely contribute to improvement of an athlete's performance.

The aim of this research is to determine the health related habits of table tennis coaches regarding nutrition, alcohol consumption and physical activity.

Methods

The sample comprises 46 male table tennis coaches from different clubs in Croatia at the average age of 39.5 ± 0.4 years. For dietary habits, alcohol consumption and smoking habits determination, the new questionnaire was constructed based on previous

national and international studies (Paugh, 2005.). To determine physical activity levels the Baecke Questionnaire of habitual physical activity was used (Baecke et al., 1982.). The questionnaires were completed anonymously. The obtained data were analyzed by standard statistical procedures, with statistical software package SPSS 13.0.

Results and discussion

Results are presented in tables. Table 1. deals with habitual physical activity, Table 2. with dietary habits, Table 3. with smoking habits and Table 4. with alcohol consumption of tennis coaches.

Table 1. Work, sport and leisure time indices in table tennis coaches

Work index	Sport index	Leisure-time index
2.9 ± 0.6	3.0 ± 0.7	2.9 ± 0.5

There is a great number of different self-reported physical activity questionnaires. They are analysing different types of physical activity. According to Jacobs and his coworkers (1993.) no questionnaire can offer the analysis of all types of physical activity. Baecke questionnaire is a simple one but well constructed questionnaire which offers the determination of occupational, work activity, sport activity during leisure time, leisure time activity, and at last the total physical activity. In comparison with average Croatian population of the same age (Mišigoj-Duraković et al., 2000.) table tennis coaches are showing higher values of all 3 indices. This difference is particularly present in sport index and leisure time index, meaning that table tennis coaches spent more time physically active.

The dietary habits questionnaire consisted of 18 questions (Paugh, 2005.). Dietary habits of the subjects were determined by items regarding the number of meals per day, skipping the meals, intake of particular food subgroups based on the food pyramid, liquid intake and vitamin and mineral supplements intake, especially those used usually in sports. Answers ranged from always (4) to never (1) and the possible range for scores was from 18 to 72. Coaches had 45.6 points on the average. According to the results it is obvious that dietary habits of the coaches are not on adequate level. It seems that coaches, like athletes, have very busy schedule so they are skipping some meals in their daily routine, but breakfast is not the usually skipped one. Especially there is a problem in eating fast food. Coaches are rarely dieting and they do not seek for much nutrition information nor are recording what they eat. It is interesting to notice that no single coach attended some of the nutrition courses and that the sources of information for nutritional facts that they use are not always scientifically justified. Most of their knowledge comes from different popular magazines. Although in recent years there is a significant growth in the literature relating to different aspects of sports nutrition it seems that table tennis coaches have not interest in it.

Table 2. Nutrition habits questionnaire (Paugh, 2005)

1. How often do you eat breakfast in the morning?
2. Based on three meals per day, how often do you skip at least one meal per day?
3. How often do you take vitamin supplements?
4. How often do you take mineral supplements?
5. How often do you eat three base meals per day?
6. How often do you record what you eat?
7. How often do you drink water?
8. How often do you drink carbonated beverages?
9. How often are you on a "diet"?
10. How often do you eat breads, cereals, pasta, potatoes, or rice?
11. How often do you eat fruits, such as apples, bananas, or oranges?
12. How often do you eat vegetables, such as broccoli, tomatoes, carrots, or salad?
13. How often do you eat dairy products such as milk, yogurt, or cheese?

14. How often do you eat berry jams, cookies, candies, or other sweets?
15. How often do you snack on foods like potato chips, cakes, candies, donuts, or soda?
16. How often do you snack on foods like bagels, yogurt, popcorn, pretzels, or fruits?
17. How often do you eat fast food?
18. How often do you seek out nutrition information?

Smoking is unfortunately widely accepted and though the campaign against smoking is going on in many countries the real results are still not apparent, and the number of deaths caused by cancer that could be connected with smoking is still very high.

Table 3. Smoking habits of table tennis coaches

SMOKING			PER DAY		
YES	NO	IF EVER	5-10	11-20	> 20
16	32	11	9	6	1

Smoking is still rather widely accepted habit and though the campaign against smoking is going on in Croatia, as in many countries worldwide, the real results are still not apparent, and the number of deaths caused by trachea, bronchial and lung cancer is still very high (Prabhat and Chaloupka, 1999; Samet and Yang, 2001; Samet and Yoon, 2001). Concerning the smoking habits it was found that 34.8% of the table tennis coaches are smokers, although the majority of them stated that that they are smoking between 5 and 10 cigarettes per day. This is little above the estimated average ratio in Croatian population which is in male population 34.1% (data from Croatian Ministry of health – School of public Health “Andrija Štampar” – www.snz.hr (2006). Interesting there are no pipe or cigar smokers.

Among the nonsmokers there are also those who were smoking before. The investigation carried out by The European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs showed that about 70% of young people at the age of 15 tried smoking.

Table 4. Alcohol consumption of table tennis coaches

ALCOHOL		BEER			WINE			SPIRITS		
		0.3 l/day			0.2 l/day			0.03 l/day		
YES	NO	1-2	3-5	> 5	1-2	3-5	> 5	1-2	3-5	> 5
31	15	14	2	0	17	5	0	14	0	0

66% of coaches are consuming alcohol, mostly beer and wine. It is well established that large amounts of alcohol have detrimental effect on health influencing the most of organs (Kasper et al., 2004). The scientific investigations established J-shaped relationship between the alcohol use and health with the lowest mortality and morbidity risk occurring among light and moderate drinkers (Gunzerath et al., 2004). Light-moderate drinking is defined as no more than two drinks per day for healthy men (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2000). Lighter drinking carries lower total mortality risk largely because of lower coronary disease risk. The investigators connect this findings with antioxidant and antithrombotic substances present in wine, mostly in red wine, which are potentially beneficial against atherothrombotic disease and cancer (Booyse and Park, 2001; Paschall and Lipton, 2005). Due to Klatsky and his coworkers (2003) upon the prospective study of over 12.000 Californian, light-moderate wine drinking is associated with the lowest risk for all-cause and coronary disease mortality. They also reported that light-moderate beer and spirits drinkers had also lower mortality risk relative to lifetime abstainers.

The results of our study indicate that all 66% of coaches are light-moderate drinkers and most of them are drinking one or two glasses of wine with their main meals. It seems that coaches are not engaged in occasional heavy drinking and, the most important thing, they are not used to drink in front of their athletes. So we can say that the light-moderate habit of wine or beer drinking could actually have beneficial long-term health effects for table tennis coaches.

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