Athletic Trainers’ Confidence in Identifying and Effectively Managing Disordered Eating in Female Athletes Following an Educational Seminar

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Objective: To examine the change in athletic trainers’ confidence and knowledge in identifying and effectively managing disordered eating in female athletes following an educational seminar.

Design and Setting: A 40-minute educational seminar was developed to educate athletic trainers regarding how to identify, prevent, and manage disordered eating in female athletes. The seminar was presented at the Big Sky Sports Medicine and Athletic Training Conference (BSSMATC). A 2-page, 60-item survey was distributed and filled out prior to the seminar, and a 52-item post-seminar survey was completed following the presentation.

Subjects: Participants in this study were certified athletic trainers at the BSSMATC in Big Sky, Montana, on February 3, 2005. There were 26 participants in this study from a variety of settings, including collegiate, high school, and clinic/outpatient.

Measurements: Revisions were made to a survey originally designed by Vaughan, King, & Cottrell (2004) to answer our research questions.

Results: Prior to the seminar, more than half of the athletic trainers (62%) wanted more training on how to effectively deal with an athlete with disordered eating, yet only 18% had an educational session on disordered eating offered to them at their institution within the last year. The majority of the athletic trainers that attended the educational seminar (85%) felt that both their level of knowledge on disordered eating had increased as well as their ability to help an athlete with disordered eating, while 77% of the athletic trainers indicated that their confidence in identifying disordered eating increased following the seminar.

Conclusions: Institutions employing athletic trainers are encouraged to organize educational seminars on disordered eating. The educational seminar we developed on disordered eating was shown to increase athletic trainers’ confidence in their ability to identify, prevent, and effectively manage cases of disordered eating in athletes.