

Eating disorders in sports: understanding the unique risk factors or athletes' reflection

3 hours

This is a topic that I think is talked about more and more with the rise of social media and the positive and negative influences this could have on people. But I don't think this is talked about as much as it should be in sports. They dive into many of the reason why and how a competitive drive or wanted to succeed could hide this from coaches, athletes and parents. They also go into what disorder eating can present as and some of them, I think are often praised in sports and could affect the athletes in their life. Another misunderstood idea of ED is what causes them and these are very complex and can be a combination of genetic, socio-cultural, familial and personality traits. But another factor that is overlooked is that it's easy to fix but this is very dangerous thought and in reality, they are very difficult to overcome.

Because the ED are sometimes rewarded in sports as I mentioned before but coaches should understand that these are not simply a choice the athletes make to lose weight or perform better but rather a disorder and should be treated as such. I think the warning signs portion of this module were insightful because I think when most people think about ED they don't think of athletes. This gives is information, like excessive exercise, poor body image, focused on weight and shape, inability to take rest days because of guilt, isolation, injuries, rigid food rules and sadly all of these can be masked with achievement instead of treatment. Because of this praise, many athletes who have ED are not confronted because the people and coaches around them don't think it is a problem but also to the other extreme, they hold intervention like approach that could not

only put the athlete on defense but could worsen their condition. The statistics around females and males in sports was an eye opener and more so than most athletes don't get put in these statistics because they may avoid certain actions, so they are not flagged.

I think this kind of education should be integrated into coaches' education as well because while the coaches may not directly imply certain conditions that could cause ED, the athletes could feel pressure that could increase their risk. They also mention a key point that could relate to coaches and us, which is stay in our lane unless qualified because it can cause more harm than good. While this means nutrition, food and body weight for coaches this could be knowing when to properly refer clients to qualified healthcare professionals. Another key about education, is proper imaging and while certain concepts like REDs could not reach athletes, however, using the same diagram but illustrating how it can affect their performance instead of health issues could be more impactful. While ED is talked about more today a lot of this only mentions eating habits and not compulsive exercise and this can affect around 39-48% of athletes but is secondary to ED. This can be murky waters because it could seem like the athlete is just hard working and seen as great, but it can cause serious harm. When you hear athlete heart you think they are healthy and the lower the better but there is a threshold that goes from healthy to not so healthy. I know nutrition education is changing in other healthcare professions, but med students only spend 13 minutes around ED and because are great at hiding ED this could cause many cases to go untreated. I think, this module was a wonderful opportunity, but I think having more education on ED for not only athletes but the general population throughout the program could be helpful. I know we have had education on this in the past,

but I think just like everything else, it is ever evolving and by aspect alone leaves room for a lot of education for us.