

Fit5 Exercise Implementation in Special Athletes in The Rio Grande Valley Area

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ABSTRACT

Fitness is an important aspect of the Special Olympics mission. Physical activity, adequate nutrition, and hydration enhance athletes' sports performance and improve health and overall quality of life. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of the study is under a service contract, assist Special Olympics International in data collection to evaluate the effectiveness of their Fit 5 program intervention. Analyze the health and fitness status of the Rio Grande Valley Special Olympics Athletes and the effectiveness of the Fit 5 program in the area. **METHODS:** Participant eligibility were current special Olympic athletes aged 18 and older in the Rio Grande Valley area. Forty-six special Olympic athletes (Mean \pm SD; 25.5 \pm 7yrs; 33 \pm 9kg/m²; 20 male) participated in the study; they completed a six-week exercise intervention consisting of 2 exercise sessions per week delivered remotely. The exercise sessions followed the Fit5 guidelines for endurance, strength, flexibility, and balance exercise recommendations. Three different measurements and surveys were taken: at the beginning of the implementation, after the six-week exercise intervention, and a month after. Special Olympics approved all surveys and exercises. Data were considered for statistical analysis if the participants completed the three measurements and surveys. Data collected included demographic information, healthy habits survey, resting heart rate, blood pressure, BMI, waist circumference, pushup and curl up endurance test, recovery heart rate for a step test, and a single leg balance test. One Way ANOVA was performed to compare the measurement in the three-time instances. **RESULTS:** Nine participants (25.77 \pm 5.8yrs; 36.9 \pm 7.8kg/mg²; 3 male) completed the three sessions. There were small improvements in waist circumference and blood pressure, but One Way ANOVA showed no significant difference by the exercise interventions. **CONCLUSION:** Special Olympic Athletes in The Rio Grande Valley Area are an underserved population that can benefit from structured exercise implementations such as Fit5. Future interventions should aim to increase the exercise session and the retention of participants.