

Collegiate Athletes' Menstrual Health Management and Athletic Performance

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ABSTRACT

There is limited understanding and support for female collegiate athletes' menstrual health and its connection to their performance in sport. While it is recognized that the menstrual cycle influences the physical and mental health, as well as athletic performance of these athletes, their actual knowledge and management practices regarding their menstrual cycles have not been extensively studied. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this study was to assess female collegiate athletes' knowledge of the menstrual cycle and their management practices. **METHODS:** After receiving approval from Georgian Court University's (GCU's) Internal Research Review Board (IRRB), Division 2 female sports teams were recruited via mass email. Volunteers participated in a cross-sectional survey that covered topics such as knowledge and experiences with menstrual irregularities, team policies, and the effects of physical, mental, and emotional symptoms on athletic performance. The data collection period lasted 3 months. **RESULTS:** A total of 41 female athletes (Age range: 18-23 years, 100% female) participated in the study. The results indicated decreased athletic abilities and performance during the luteal and menstrual phases due to severe symptoms (42.32%), a lack of knowledge about menstrual cycle management in athletics, minimal concern about menstrual irregularities while 50% has irregularity or loss of period in college, and discomfort and inexperience with discussing menstrual cycles with the coaching staff (52%). **CONCLUSION:** The findings of this study highlight the need for future education and integration of female menstrual health in high-intensity sports such as collegiate athletics. There appears to be significant barriers to managing the menstrual cycle as a collegiate athlete, including high rates of irregularities and severe effects on performance. Athletes are not thriving in the current environment surrounding menstrual cycle management.