

Nutritional knowledge, attitude and practice among university level female football players

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Received: 25.01.2012; Revised: 28.02.2012; Accepted: 01.05.2012

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Sixty university level female football players were selected for the present study from district Kurukshetra. The selected players represented different universities during Inter-University football tournaments held at Kurukshetra University. A well structured questionnaire was personally administered to the subjects. The questionnaire contained thirty two questions about nutrition knowledge, attitude and practice. The results were analyzed using arithmetic mean, standard deviation and percentages. The subjects exhibited average nutritional knowledge about hydration (55.55 per cent) followed by carbohydrates (46.29 per cent), protein (37.03 per cent), fat (37.03 per cent), vitamin and minerals (27.77 per cent). Knowledge and attitude have great influence on day to day practice in sports. Since our athletes rely heavily on peers, family and coaches for nutrition information effort is clearly needed both in counseling and imparting nutrition education to our athletes and coaches during training programmes.

■ **KEY WORDS** : Nutritional knowledge, Attitude, Dietary practice

■ **HOW TO CITE THIS PAPER** : Davar, Vinti, Saini, Shweta and Punia, Neetu (2012). Nutritional knowledge, attitude and practice among university level female football players. *Asian J. Home Sci.*, 7 (1) : 96-99.

Although football is the world's most popular sport with over 120 million amateur players worldwide, scientific research concerning the nutritional needs of football players has been scant. Nutrition is an important aspect of an athlete's training programme in attaining high level of achievements (Beals and Mannore, 1998). Physical fitness and training are very much dependent on nutritional status of sports personnel (Preekhan and Srinivassan, 2010).

Participation of girls' in sports has increased significantly, about 600 per cent in last four decades (Messina *et al.*, Nattiv and Armsey, 1977). Unfortunately, increased participation in women's athletics came without an understanding of the specific needs of the female athlete. Physiologic differences in females, combined with internal demands and external pressures during sports activities, have led to health problems and injuries occurring uniquely in the female players. Female players' emphasis often is not only on skill and endurance but also on leanness and appearance (Ziegler *et al.*, 1988). Hence, these players are susceptible to what has become known as the female athlete triad of disordered eating, menstrual dysfunction, and osteoporosis

(Joy *et al.*, 1997). Optimal nutrition is essential for peak performance and preventing female-specific health problems.

Researches suggest that knowledge and attitude have an effect on eating habits (Laurie *et al.*, 2003). A study by Ruka *et al.*, (2005) described, that although 85.6 per cent of students were aware of the concept of nutritionally balanced food; but only seven per cent of them applied this when selecting food from menu. Nutrition is not only important to improve performance but also promote healthy dietary practices in the long term (Weber, 2004).

Therefore, the present study has been undertaken to assess the nutritional knowledge, attitude and practices among university level female football players. This study would help to develop educational material and programme to promote greater knowledge and healthy attitude among players, which would ensure their better health and performance.

■ RESEARCH METHODS

Subjects :

Sixty female football players were selected who were