

An Analysis of Perceived Risk and Corresponding Risk Management Practices Related to Disease Control and Prevention in Club Sport Programs

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Sport activities within campus recreation and club sport programs will always involve a certain amount of risk. It is therefore essential for such club sport programs to identify and address such risks in an effort to reduce them. While club sport program administrators are wise to focus on known risks (based upon frequency and severity), it would also be prudent for them to account for new and emerging areas of risk that may threaten the safety of their staff and/or participants (Fuller & Drawer, 2004; Lee, Farley, & Kwon, 2010; Spengler, Anderson, Connaughton, & Baker, 2009). For example, a risk in the sport environment, which has recently received a great deal of media attention, is potential exposure to bloodborne pathogens and communicable diseases (MRSA, HIV, HBV, Swine Flu, etc.). Disease control and prevention within campus recreation club sport programs is a critical element of a comprehensive risk management (RM) plan. Without it, club sport employees, participants and institutions may be exposed to increased health and liability risks. The purpose of this study was to examine: (1) club sport program administrators' perception of the risk of bloodborne pathogens and communicable diseases to employees and participants, and (2) the scope and nature of RM practices relevant to reducing such risks. Based upon a review of literature, a focus group, and test of content validity, a 40-item online survey, utilizing a 7-point Likert scale and forced response questions, was developed. The study population was the club sport director at every U.S. institution (college/university; $N = 522$) listed in the *NIRSA 2011 Recreational Sports Directory* (NIRSA, 2011). An e-mail containing an informed consent and link to the survey was sent to all directors. Two follow-up e-mails were sent to non-responders and 156 completed surveys were returned, representing a 30% response rate. Data were analyzed using SPSS 17.0 (SPSS, 2008). Respondents indicated that they were familiar with the risk of communicable diseases and bloodborne pathogens in the sport environment, with 84% ($\bar{x} = 5.12$; $SD = 1.11$) reporting that they were familiar to very familiar with the risks. A total of 62.6% ($\bar{x} = 4.45$; $SD = 1.15$) of respondents also rated the risk associated with communicable diseases and bloodborne pathogens within their club sport programs as moderate to extreme. Furthermore, 94.9% ($\bar{x} = 5.97$; $SD = 0.85$) of respondents indicated that there was an increased risk of transmitting communicable diseases and bloodborne pathogens in heavy contact sports such as rugby, wrestling, and boxing. Additionally, 69.3% ($\bar{x} = 4.96$; $SD = 1.31$) indicated that there was an increased risk of transmitting communicable diseases and bloodborne pathogens in sports that require the wearing of significant amounts of protective equipment such as fencing, lacrosse, and ice hockey. The data suggest the respondents' awareness and perception of the risks associated with communicable diseases and bloodborne pathogens is somewhat high, and, therefore, should warrant

the adoption and practice of relevant RM policies. A majority (57.7%) of respondents, however, indicated that they did not have a written RM plan that specifically addressed disease control and prevention. Additionally, 53.2% reported that they did not have an exposure control plan that addressed bloodborne pathogens. Failure to properly manage the risks associated with communicable diseases and bloodborne pathogens in sport can lead to severe infection, illness, death, and subsequent legal claims (Menaker & Connaughton, 2009). It is prudent for club sport program administrators to develop and/or revise RM plans aimed at reducing such risks. Practical implications and suggestions for future research will be provided.

References

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