

Kansas high school football coaches and their perception of the action and effects of sports supplements in high school football players

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Abstract. Many high school football players are experimenting with advertised “performance enhancing” supplements. Many of these athletes turn to their coaches for questions and advice regarding supplements. **Purpose:** The purpose of this project is to learn the opinions of Kansas high school football coaches regarding sport supplement use in high school football players. **Methods:** An email survey was sent out to all Kansas high school football coaches regarding their knowledge and recommendations of supplement use in their athletes. **Results:** 53% of the coaches thought supplements were beneficial to a high school athlete, 32% were neutral, and 15 % either disagreed or strongly disagreed. 80% of the coaches were aware of their athletes taking supplements. 72% of coaches recommended supplement use to their athletes. 70% stated they had received educational material regarding supplement use in high school athletes. 90% were interested in receiving information regarding sport supplement education in high school aged athletes if available. **Conclusion:** A wide degree of variation exists between different coaches and their thoughts and opinions regarding supplement use in high school football players.

1. Introduction

High school football players particularly, at a time in their lives when their bodies are starting to mature and develop physically, are drawn to claims made of the potential benefits of sports supplements. There is a need for nutrition education of athletes to explain the appropriate use of these dietary supplements [1]. High school football coaches assume many roles besides their coaching responsibilities. Common classes taught by coaches include Physical Education and Strength and Conditioning. Many coaches are hired to fill these positions due to their increased knowledge of athletics and the needs of athletes. Student athletes realize this and trust that their questions regarding sports supplements can correctly be answered by these sources. This project is a study of Kansas high school football coaches and their knowledge of the actions and effects of sports

supplements. Kansas high school football coaches were surveyed to learn more about their perceptions and education on the use of supplements in their athletes.

2. Experiment

This descriptive study utilized a non- random sample of Kansas high school football coaches. A survey was designed and sent by e-mail to all Kansas high school football coaches to learn more about their perceptions and education on the use of supplements in their athletes. Each coach was identified by using a Kansas State High School Athletic Association contact list. Four weeks after the e-mails had been sent out, the desired number or replies had been received.

3. Results

Out of the 380 Kansas high school football coaches, 90 responses were received. When asked whether or not coaches thought supplements were beneficial to a high school athlete, 15 % replied that they strongly disagree or disagree, 32% were neutral, 39% agreed, and 13% strongly agreed (figure 1).

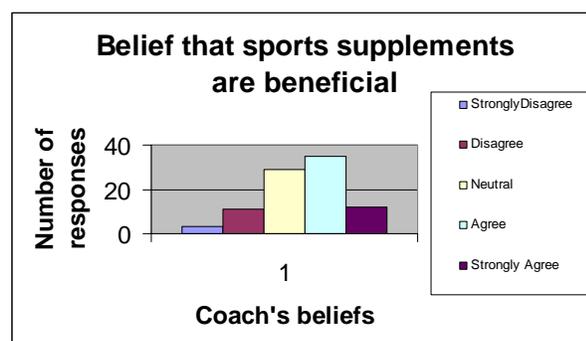


Figure 1: Coach's response when asked if they thought supplements were beneficial to high school athletes

80% of coaches were aware of their athletes taking supplements while 20% were not. Of the supplements being used, 58% of coaches knew their athletes were taking creatine and protein, 12% ripped fuel, 6% nitric oxide, and 3% Hydroxycut. When questioned if they ever recommended supplement use to their athletes, 6% said never, 22% rarely, 51% sometimes, 19% frequently, and 2% always (figure 2).

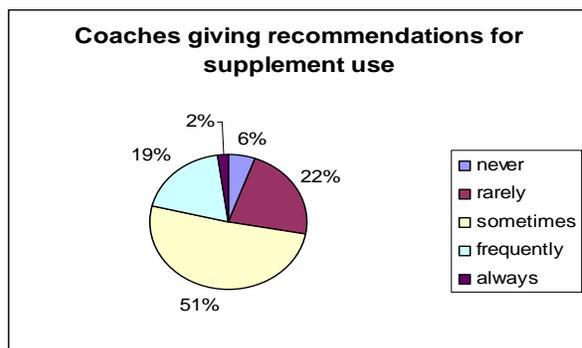


Figure 2: Response given by coaches when asked if they have ever given recommendations for supplement use to their football players.

70% of coaches surveyed had received educational material regarding supplement use in high school athletes. Of those 70% who said yes, 42 coaches received this information from a magazine, 37 from journals, 31 from coaches' meetings, 18 from a health care professional, 8 from a health food store, 1 from a sporting goods store, and 6 from other sources. When asked if they would be interested in receiving information regarding sport supplement education in high school aged athletes if available, 50% said they strongly agree, 39% agreed, 7% neutral, 1% disagreed, and 1% strongly disagreed.

4. Discussion

There are a lot of differing opinions amongst high school football coaches about the use of sports supplements in their high school athletes. Many coaches feel that sports supplements are beneficial to some degree at this age. Many commented and agreed that supplements are only beneficial when used in conjunction with diet and exercise. One coach commented, "I recommend that athletes should be consuming 5-6 meals a day prior to purchasing a supplement. I feel that if they have the discipline to do that, then they are serious enough to look into supplements." Coaches that did not feel supplements were beneficial commonly agreed that high school athletes disregard the importance of a good diet and exercise in exchange for the idea that supplements will replace and even surpass the benefits of diet and

exercise. Many coaches did admit that they were aware of their athletes taking supplements. Coaches comment that creatine and protein are by far the most popular of the supplements used by high school football players. When questioned if their athletes have ever asked them about recommendations regarding supplement use, over half of coaches replied "sometimes."

Survey results showed that coaches have received educational materials regarding supplement use in high school football players. The most common source of this information came from magazines, followed by journals, then coach's meetings and lastly, health professionals. Magazines are by far the easiest source to access. Professional journals are usually more accurate than magazines due to the criteria it takes to publish a study. Coaches meetings provide information that is only as good as the coach presenting the material and his resources, yet many coaches feel reassurance hearing the information from other men sharing the same responsibilities and position. Information from health professionals ranked fourth on the list

The coaches surveyed indicated that they would be interested in information regarding sport supplement education in high school aged athletes. One coach replied, "Sports supplements would be a topic that I would like to see presented at more coaching clinics." Another coach, one which supports supplement use, replied, "I believe one of the biggest issues is that most people are uninformed about supplements." Regardless of whether or not high school coaches are for or against supplement use in high school football players, it can be agreed upon that they would like more information on this subject.

5. Summary

Each year, more high school student athletes, especially football players, are gaining interest in sports supplements to help improve their strength and performance. Many of these athletes will seek advice and instruction, at least to some degree, from their high school coaches [2]. The knowledge and perceptions of sports supplements in high school football coaches has not been well researched. By surveying Kansas high school football coaches, this study provides insight into how knowledgeable coaches are about sports supplements and their benefits and risks in high school football players.

[1] Burke, LM, Read, RSD. Dietary Supplements in Sport. Sports Medicine. 1993;15:43-65.

[2] Sobal J, Marquart LF. Vitamin/mineral supplement use among high school athletes. Adolescence. 1994;29:835-843.