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Assessment of Nutrient Intake, Nutritional Knowledge and Dietary Habits of Omani University Student Athletes

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Abstract : In a cross-sectional research design, we assessed the nutrient intake, nutritional status, nutritional knowledge and dietary habits of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) student athletes. A total of 71 (49 male and 22 female) student athletes with a mean age of 21.0 ± 1.81 and 19.32 ± 0.72 years and body mass index (BMI) of 22.51 ± 1.98 and 20.34 ± 2.97 kg/m2 for male and female respectively, participated in this study. A study questionnaire consisting of 2 sections was distributed to the participants. Section I included 18 questions regarding the demographic information, whereas the Section II consisted of 20 questions regarding the nutrition knowledge. The dietary intake of participants was collected by using a 7-days food diary identifying the frequency as well as the variety of food consumption. Significant differences ($P < 0.05$) were observed in the main sources of nutrition information used by the male and female athletes. Male athletes mainly had most of the nutrition information from friends (17%) whereas female athletes relied mainly on the family (20%). More female athletes (20%) were using TV as a source of nutrition information as compared to male athletes (15%). Both male and female athletes had the minimum nutrition information from dietitians and physicians. Significant ($P < 0.05$) differences were also observed in the nutritional knowledge and dietary habits scores of male and female athletes, which were 57 % and 49 %, respectively. Male athletes were classified to have fair nutritional knowledge and dietary habits, whereas the female athletes had poor nutritional knowledge and dietary habits. The average daily energy intake of male athletes was 2595 ± 358 kcal/day. Carbohydrate, fat, and protein contributed 64%, 22%, and 14%, of the total energy intake for the male athletes, respectively. The energy and macronutrients intake of male athletes was within the recommended dietary intake. The results indicated some gaps in the nutritional knowledge of SQU student athletes and suggest that there is a need for developing strategies in counseling and teaching the athletes to improve their nutritional knowledge and dietary habits.

Keywords : nutrient assessment, nutritional knowledge, dietary habits, Omani University athletes
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