

Barriers to Participation in Sport for Children without Disability: A Systematic Review

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Abstract : Participation in sport is linked to better mental and physical health in children and adults. Studies have shown children who participate in sports benefit from improved social skills, self-confidence, communication skills and a better quality of life. Children who participate in sports from a young age are also more likely to continue to have active lifestyles during adulthood. This is an important consideration with a nation where physical activity levels are declining and the incidences of obesity are rising. Getting children active and keeping them active can provide long term health benefits to the individual but also a potential reduction in health costs in the future. This systematic review aims to identify the barriers to participation in sport for children aged up to 18 years and encompasses both qualitative and quantitative studies. The bibliographic databases, EMBASE, Medline, CINAHL and SportDiscus were searched. Additional hand searches were carried out on review articles found in the searches to identify any studies that may have been missed. Studies involving children up to 18 years without additional needs focusing on barriers to participation in sport were included. Randomised control trials, policy guidelines, studies with sport as an intervention, studies focusing on the female athlete triad, tobacco abuse, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, pre exercise testing, and cardiovascular disease were excluded. Abstract review, full paper review and quality appraisal were conducted by two researchers. A consensus meeting took place to resolve any differences at the abstract, full text and data extraction / quality appraisal stages. The CASP qualitative studies appraisal tool and the CASP cohort studies tool (excluding question 3 and 4 which refer to interventions) were used for quality appraisal in this review. The review identified several salient barriers to participation in sport for children. These barriers ranged from the uniform worn during school physical education lessons to the weather during participation in sport. The most commonly identified barriers in the review include parental support, time allocation, location of the activity and the cost of the activity. Therefore, it would be beneficial for a greater provision to be made within the school environment for children to participate sport. This can reduce the cost and time commitment required from parents to encourage participation. This would help to increase activity levels of children, which ultimately can only be a good thing.

Keywords : barrier, children, participation, sport

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