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An assessment of the nutritional intake of soccer referees

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Abstract

Objective

The present study aims to analyze the eating habits and attitudes of a group of soccer referees and linesmen.

Method

A nutritional study was undertaken of thirty-five soccer referees (aged between 18 and 50) refereeing at different levels, from the Spanish national third division down to the provincial second division. Through the use of a 3-day food diary and 24-hour recall, this study analyzed the intake and distribution of macro- and micro-nutrients and of dietary fiber consumed on different types of day (normal, training, and match days).

Results

There were no significant differences in calorie intake related to the three types of day (normal, training, and match days). This was true both of overall amounts (2371.1 kcal, 2479.7 kcal, and

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training, and match days). This was true both of overall amounts (2371.1 kcal, 2473.7 kcal, and 2368.4 kcal, respectively) and amounts per unit of body weight (32.4 kcal/kg, 33.9 kcal/kg, and 32.4 kcal/kg, respectively). In respect of macro-nutrient intake, more specifically carbohydrates, the subjects consumed a diet with an insufficient amount of carbohydrates: 279 g, as against the 371 g (REC1) or 540 g (REC2) recommended according to physical activity levels. Slight increases were observed on game days, but were not statistically significant. Consideration of micro-nutrients showed that the quantities of three vitamins (B6, B12, and C) consumed were above the recommended amounts. However, this was not an issue, since the figures related to water-soluble vitamins. Finally, the amounts of minerals (Ca, Mg, and Fe) and fiber consumed were close to recommended values, regardless of the type of day being considered.

Conclusions

This study found that the group of referees investigated consumed a diet that did not have sufficient calories from carbohydrates, in view of their occupation. This poor nutritional status might interfere with the development of their sporting performance and ultimately increase the risk of injury. This implies a need to design and implement a diet and to introduce educational programs on nutrition for these sportspeople.

Keywords: Nutritional requirements; Dietary record; Soccer referees; Macro-nutrients; Analyses

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