

The Legal Responsibility of Sport Trainers in Providing Health- Oriented Trainings and Nutritional Supplements

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Abstract

Introduction: Regarding the prevalence of supplements and energizer drugs abuse and the civil and criminal responsibility of sports trainers in this regard, this study aimed to investigate the legal responsibility of sport trainers in providing health-oriented trainings and nutritional supplements.

Methods: In this causal-comparative or post-hoc study, 101 volunteer trainers of sport clubs in Shiraz were selected as a cluster sampling. After explaining the purpose of the research, a researcher-made questionnaire (including 14 questions for assessing the sports trainers' awareness of their civil and criminal responsibility on nutritional supplements, whose validity had been approved by the professors of law and sports sciences) was completed and collected. To analyze the data, chi square test was run using SPSS 20 and Excel 2007 ($p \leq 0.05$).

Results: The sports trainers are aware of the civil liability of the drugs prescribed in their sport fields ($p=0.001$), and awareness of the legal issues during the coaching course is gained, the same as awareness of civil liability ($p=0.001$). However, according to the trainers themselves, provision of legal training on civil liability for educators is necessary ($p = 0.001$).

Conclusion: In general, it can be concluded that in spite of sports trainers' good knowledge and education about the civil liability of the abuse of nutritional supplements, the need for more educating legal issues is essential for trainers and athletes.

Keywords: Nutritional Supplement, Legal Liability, Sport Trainer

Introduction

Ever since human beings have participated in sporting activities, the issue of nutrition has always been in the minds of athletes (1). Given that nutritional needs of athletes are higher than normal, and with increasing duration and intensity of physical activity, these needs also increase, meeting the metabolic needs of athletes during exercise or aftercare requires more nutrients to prepare the body in the prospective bouts of exercise (2). In some cases, providing the athlete's need for energy, sometimes more than 9,000 kilocalories per day, is difficult through normal feeding due to the large amounts of food consumed or the short intervals between workouts (3). Therefore, most athletes in professional and even amateur sports tend to use energizer drugs (4, 5) to increase their exercise

performance and ability, accelerate the recovery, and reduce muscular injuries. Researchers believe that the use of nutritional supplements in the standard volume in these cases can be beneficial due to the nutritional requirements of athletes (3, 5). However, the abuse of nutritional supplements and drugs is always accompanied with complications such as hormonal disorders following the use of hormonal drugs, central nervous system disorders, sexual anomalies, cardiac disease, hearing impairment, infertility, hair loss, acne, behavioral disorders, liver cancer, and increased hepatic enzymes in athletes (6, 7). The prevalence of malnourishment in nutritional supplements and energizer drugs, especially in those referring to bodybuilding clubs, make it doubly important to increase the awareness of athletes, coaches, doctors and

nutritionists about the compositions, side effects, benefits and uses of various types of nutritional supplements and energizer drugs (1). On the other hand, considering the role of trainer in providing nutritional and pharmaceutical information, studies have shown that 84% of athletes consider their trainers to be the main source of nutritional information and the choice of the supplements type (4, 8, 9). This evidence suggests the need to provide trainers with ongoing training on sports supplements (4, 10). On the other hand, trainers' lack of knowledge of the legal cases leads to their incapacity to perform the task or establishes a relationship between the incapacity and damage; hence the compensation will be the responsibility of the trainers (9, 11). Considering the role of the trainer and his civil liability, many sportsmen can be within the limits of legal and legal responsibilities and be accountable to the law against the incidents and events (11). Also, Bonyan and Kashef in 2014, in a study to examine the differences in legal views of male and female sports trainers, concluded that 81.45 % of sports trainers were aware of their legal duties and responsibilities in sporting events (12). The need for understanding the bases, pillars and the effects of civil and criminal liability of sports trainers in nutritional supplements is felt due to prevalence and ease of access to energizer drugs, the establishment of world championships, the presence of real or legal characters to support and invest in championship sport, stressing material issues in the field of championship sports, as well as the need for a civil and criminal liability that seeks identification of responsibility and ultimately compensation of losses and accepting the principle of the necessity of compensating for losses. Accordingly, the present study aimed to investigate the legal responsibility of sports trainers in providing health-oriented training and nutritional supplements.

Methods

Considering the purpose, this research is a causal-comparative or post-hoc study of retrospective nature. The statistical population of this study was all the trainers of sport clubs in Shiraz. A sample of 101 participants was selected from the statistical population of the study. In the present study, cluster sampling was performed. Considering that the purpose of this study was to investigate the civil and criminal liability of sports trainers in nutritional supplements, for this purpose, the researcher initially referred to the General Department of Physical Education of Shiraz and then provided a complete list of all sport clubs. Then, based on cluster sampling, 101 clubs were selected as sample in all parts of the city of Shiraz. The researcher then referred to the selected sports clubs. After explaining the purpose of the implementation of the present research, questionnaires were distributed among the trainers and after completing, they were gathered. It is worth noting that the questionnaire of the present study was a researcher-made one having 14 questions regarding the trainers' knowledge of civil and criminal liability on nutritional supplements whose validity had been confirmed by professors of law and sports sciences. To describe the data, descriptive statistics (percentage of responses to options) was used, and to analyze the data, chi square test was run using SPSS 20 and Excel 2007 ($p \leq 0.05$).

Results

Descriptive findings showed that 31.7 % of sports trainers had diploma degree, 1.0 % associate degree and 67.3% had bachelor degree. Also, 0.5 % were yoga trainers, 31.7% bodybuilding trainers, 37.6 % fitness trainers, 1.0% soccer trainers, and 12.9 % of martial arts trainers. The results of chi square test in Table 2 show that, according to trainers, sports trainers are aware of the civil liability of the drugs prescribed in their sport fields ($p = 0.001$). Also, according to the trainers

themselves, during the educational program, training is provided on legal issues as well as awareness of civil liability (p= 0.001).

Nevertheless, based on their views, the provision of legal training on civil liability is obligatory for trainers (p=0.001).

Table 1. Table of the subjects' responses

Answer (percent) Question	Yes	No
Awareness of the civil liability of nutritional supplements and medications	18.8	81.2
Awareness of the permission of the trainer to provide a nutrition plan	83.2	16.8
Awareness of the permission of the trainer to provide a sport supplement	91.1	8.9
Trainer’s awareness of civil liability	19.8	80.2
Awareness of civil liability created by the presentation of the wrong diet plan and sports supplement	17.8	82.2
Awareness of the amount of civil liability created by the presentation of the wrong diet plan and sports supplement	14.9	85.1
Awareness of the trainer's need to have a coaching card	18.8	81.2
Providing training on sports legal issues in coaching classes	30.7	69.3
Awareness of the need for information on civil liability for trainers	16.8	83.2
Awareness of desirable education for obtaining a degree in coaching	1.0	99.0
Awareness of the desired age for obtaining a degree in coaching	99.0	1.0
Awareness of the impact of gender on coaching	86.1	13.9
Awareness of selection criteria for trainer	15.8	84.2
Requirement to have a coaching card for being a good trainer	12.9	87.1

Table 2. Results of chi square for inferential analysis of research data

Investigating the awareness of sports coaches about the civil liability of medications prescribed in their sport field				
Answer	Observed	Expected	X2	Level of Significance
Yes	70	50.50	15.05	0.001
No	31	50.50		
The need for legal training on civil liability for trainers				
Yes	101	50.50	97.04	0.001
No	0	50.50		
The need for legal training on civil liability for trainers				
Yes	9	50.50	68.20	0.001
No	92	50.50		

Discussion

The results of this study showed that athletic trainers are aware of the civil liability of the medications prescribed in their sport fields, and training is provided on legal education issues, such as awareness of civil liability. Nevertheless, according to the trainers, provision of legal training on civil liability is necessary for trainers. In the last few decades, the peripheral pressures on athletes make them

seek physiological, nutritional and psychological excellence (12); and hence, in order to obtain sporting success, they use a variety of approaches, including the use of pharmaceutical products or nutrition (4); With the advent of exercise physiology, metabolism and nutrition, it has been proven that diet and nutritional intake affect the function of athletes (13); but the benefits of nutritional supplements are not fully proven as believed by athletes (14). A nutritional supplement also

called "sports supplement" refers to substances used by athletes that are intended to eliminate nutritional deficits of athletes (for example, iron deficiency), or increase their exercise function (e.g., creatine). Therefore, in practice, nutritional supplements are said to be compounds that are commonly found in a diet and do not have doping properties (1). Despite the efforts of the sports federations to maintain the sporty heroic status, unfortunately, with the increasing growth of sports clubs, for body-building or weight loss, drug abuse has become a formidable and dangerous form, so that the young population is subject to terrible and even deadly consequences. On the other hand, it has invaded the culture of sport and its respect (15). On the other hand, the fate of supplements and drugs in an individual's body depends on the physical condition and genetic factors of his/hers, so that the degree of absorption, the function of the kidney and the liver varies from one person to another (15). The legal issues in sport are among the areas that have rarely been dealt with in the country so far, and the requirement for existence of a good, up-to-date and comprehensive source that covers all sports-related legal areas (albeit temporarily) is seriously felt. Law science deals with all aspects of our lives, and sports science is not an exception either. Today, with the growth and development of professional sports, many people make their lives in this way and hence, with the awareness of individual rights, they can increasingly protect their interests in legal matters (16). Researchers believe that the role of trainers in bodybuilding clubs is crucial in expanding the culture of nutritional supplementation, as well as energizer and hormonal substances (17). In this regard, the result of the study by Mostafa Pour Anzali and Kashif (2016) showed that 28.73 % of sports trainers were aware of their legal responsibilities from the athletes' point of view (11). In a study, researchers reported that 76.8 % of Singaporean athletes reported supplemental intake, and the most important source of information was media, the internet,

trainers and friends of athletes (9, 18). In Shushtarizadeh *et al.*'s (2013) study, it was shown that more than a half of the investigated samples were prescribed supplements and medications according to the recommendations of their trainers; and, given that their main goal is fitness and physical charm, and in addition, they belong to the young (20-30 years old), the extent of their trainers' impact on them can be justified (12). On the other hand, in a study on the difference between legal awareness and civil liability of male and female sports trainers in sports events, it was found that 81.45 % of sports trainers were fully aware of and familiar with their legal duties and responsibilities in sporting events (9). The findings of this study were inconsistent with the present study; the reasons for the inconsistency of this study with the present study can be attributed to the differences in geographical location and culture of different societies. Given the importance of providing legal training on civil liability for trainers, it is suggested that more and more hours be allocated to the training of legal issues in the field of medication and sports supplements. On the other hand, despite trainers' knowledge of legal issues and civil liability in the field of drugs and supplements, and the need for trainers to further training, the lack of separation of sports, due to the different prevalence of supplementation and medication in different sports, and the examination of the level of awareness of civil issues in various sports fields, were among the limitations of the present research. Thus, it is suggested that future research studies be specifically conducted in different fields of sport.

Conclusion

In general, it can be concluded that in spite of the present awareness and training of civil liability, educating more and more about legal issues of the use of drugs and nutritional supplements to the sports trainers and athletes is an absolute necessity.

Ethical issues

Not applicable.

Authors' contributions

All authors equally contributed to the writing and revision of this paper.

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