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Link between nutritional knowledge and athletic performance among elite athletes of the Lebanese Army Sports Club

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Statement of the Problem: Nutritional knowledge of athletes affects their athletic performance. The objective of this study is to determine the level of nutritional knowledge of elite athletes in the Lebanese Army as well as the relationship between their nutritional knowledge and their strength and endurance performance. Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: 139 Lebanese Army athletes met the inclusion criteria of the study. Nutritional knowledge was measured by a nutrition and self-efficacy questionnaire. The endurance performance was measured by the Leger-Boucher and Mercier test, while strength was determined by the 1RM (repetition maximum) measurement in 5 exercises: military press, chest press, bent over rows, squat and lunges. Findings: The nutritional knowledge score of the athletes is 10.0 ± 2.1 points. 2.9% have a low level of nutritional knowledge, 69.1% have a moderate level of nutritional knowledge and 28.1% have a high level of nutritional knowledge. 79.1% of the athletes think that proteins are a source of energy for the body, 73.4% believe that it is necessary to add a protein supplement to their diet for growth and muscle development, and 73.4% do not know that vitamin and mineral supplements do not provide energy to the body. The sources of nutritional information for these athletes are athletic trainers (53.4%), strength coaches (53.4%) and the internet (78.4%). No significant relationship was found between the nutritional knowledge score and the sum of the upper body 1RM ($r = 0.005$, $p = 0.957$), nor with the sum of the lower body 1RM ($r = -0.047$, $p = 0.606$), nor with VO₂max ($r = -0.079$, $p = 0.368$). Conclusion & Significance: The nutritional knowledge level of elite athletes of the Lebanese Army Sports Club is moderate. No significant relationship was found between nutritional knowledge score and athletic performance. Nutritional education would be important to correct gaps in nutritional knowledge and improve the athletic level of the Lebanese Army.

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