PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS AND SUSCEPTIBILITY TO THE COMMON COLD IN DISTANCE RUNNERS

by

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between specific psychosocial factors and susceptibility to the common cold in a sample of 124 distance runners. A cross-sectional survey design was used to assess the role of life events, coping, hardiness, training workload and competition frequency in the athlete’s risk of infection. Using correlational statistical techniques, it was found that the magnitude of recent life changes and the avoidance coping strategy of denial were positively related to self-reported symptoms of the common cold. Furthermore, a significant inverse correlation was observed between hardiness and symptom duration scores. However, approach coping, training workload and competition frequency were not significantly related to the dependent measures. The results of this study suggest that certain stress-related psychosocial factors are associated with susceptibility to the common cold in distance runners. Several strategies for the prevention and treatment of upper respiratory tract infections in this group are implied by these findings.

KEY TERMS: Aerobic Exercise; Approach Coping; Avoidance Coping; Common Cold; Competition Frequency; Distance Runner; Hardiness; Life Events; Stress; Training Workload.