

PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS AND SUSCEPTIBILITY TO THE
COMMON COLD IN DISTANCE RUNNERS

by

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submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the subject

PSYCHOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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NOVEMBER 2004

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I sincerely thank my supervisor, Dr Maria Papaikonomou, and joint supervisor, Dr Piet Kruger, for their constructive advice, valued suggestions, and genuine interest and encouragement. It is truly appreciated. I also acknowledge all the runners who took part in this study. I am greatly indebted to them. Finally, I express my heartfelt gratitude to my husband, Mark, for his never-ending love, patience, support and understanding. I could not have managed this ambitious undertaking without him.

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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.

