STUDENT ATHLETE PERCEPTION OF MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT AT DIVISION II INSTITUTIONS

THESIS

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for
The Master of Education Degree in the
College of Education and Human Service Professions

By
Amy Sandstrom

University of Minnesota Duluth
2012

Committee Signatures:
Chair
Member
Graduate Program Director
Abstract

Over 360,000 student athletes participate in NCAA sanctioned intercollegiate athletic programs each year. Of these student athletes, between 10 and 15 percent, 2 percent higher than their non-athlete counter parts, will experience psychological issues severe enough to warrant counseling (Watson & Kissinger, 2007). While student athletes are at a greater risk to experience psychological issues than non-athletes, they are less likely to seek out professional help (Moulton, Molstad, & Turner, 1997). The author conducted a study of student athletes at a large Division II institution. The study examined the perceptions of student athletes in relation to sport psychologists and mental health support available to them at their institution. Results identified that a large percentage of the student athletes had no knowledge of the mental health services provided by health services on campus. The findings conveyed the hesitancy of student athletes to seek help outside of the athletic department, in regard to mental health issues.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ............................................................................................................................................ 1

TABLE OF CONTENTS ........................................................................................................................ 2

CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH .......................................................................................... 5
   Purpose of the Study ..................................................................................................................... 5
   Research Questions ..................................................................................................................... 5
   Background .................................................................................................................................. 5
   Setting .......................................................................................................................................... 6
   Assumptions .................................................................................................................................. 7
   Limitations .................................................................................................................................... 7
   Definitions .................................................................................................................................... 7
   Summary .................................................................................................................................... 8

2. LITERATURE REVIEW .................................................................................................................. 9
   History of Mental Health and its Perception ................................................................................ 9
   Help Seeking Attitudes ................................................................................................................. 10
   Student Athlete Clinical Mental Health Concerns ..................................................................... 12
   Gender Specific Perspectives ....................................................................................................... 13
   Challenges of Working with Student Athletes ............................................................................ 13
   Sport Performance Consultant Perspective ................................................................................. 14
   Summary .................................................................................................................................... 16

3. RESEARCH DESIGN ..................................................................................................................... 17
Chapter One

Introduction

Every year over 360,000 student athletes participate in NCAA sanctioned intercollegiate athletic programs. Of these student athletes, it is estimated that between 10 and 15 percent, 2 percent higher than non-athletes, will experience psychological issues severe enough to warrant counseling (Watson & Kissinger, 2007). Despite this greater risk, student athletes are less likely to seek mental health support for psychological issues (Maniar, Curry, Sommers-Flanagan & Walsh, 2001). It is crucial that student athletes fully understand the mental health support available to them and how to access it.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to better understand the feelings and perspectives of student athletes in relation to sport psychologists and counseling services. The results of this study should prove helpful to athletic departments as well as counseling services on campus. By better recognizing how student athletes view mental health professionals and the support they provide, student athletes can be better educated on the benefits of mental health services.

Research Questions

What are the most important factors that influence the student athlete perception of mental health professionals? How does student athlete perception of mental health professionals impact the student athlete desire to seek mental health support?

Background

The student athlete academic experience has been the focus of many recent studies. Broughton and Neyer (2001) separated student athletes from their non-athlete peers by
identifying their additional stressors, demands, and challenges that arise from involvement in intercollegiate athletic participation. They also discussed that while similar challenges may be faced by student athletes and non-athletes, it is the context of the environment in which student athletes encounter these challenges that make them distinctive (Broughton & Neyer, 2001).

The perception of being a “weak” individual or not being able to fight through physical or emotional pain is a damaging characteristic to a student athlete. Often times, these are the terms and ideas associated with seeking mental health support (Martin, Wrisberg, Beitel & Lounsbury, 1997). In order to better educate student athletes on the benefits of mental health support, it is important for consultants, whether they be sports psychologists, psychologists, or counselors, to understand and be aware of these unique characteristics of athletes (Martin, 2005).

Of the 360,000 student athletes who compete in NCAA sanctioned intercollegiate athletic programs, approximately 100,000 of them compete at the Division II level. Based on prior statistics, of these 100,000 student athletes anywhere from 10,000 to 15,000 are suffering from psychological issues severe enough to warrant counseling (Watson & Kissinger, 2007). While previous studies have examined the challenges of working with student athletes and their perspectives of mental health professionals, these studies have focused on student athletes at the Division I level of competition. The time constraints, ideologies, and size of schools differ significantly between the three levels of NCAA competition and understanding the needs of student athletes in each is important to providing adequate support (National, 2011).

Setting

This study was conducted using student athletes, over the age of 18, at a large Division II institution located in the Northern United States.
Assumptions

The core assumptions made by the researcher were based upon their own experiences as a student athlete participating in Division II intercollegiate athletics. Due to this participation, the researcher viewed this topic as a very important piece to improving the collegiate experience for student athletes at the Division II level.

Limitations

This study was conducted using a relatively small sample size. There was the potential for a lack of diversity within the sample. Also, the age distribution within the sample size could cause some distortion of results. The researcher would caution readers to avoid making broad interpretations from this study. The findings were intended to show how student athletes, at a larger Division II institution, perceive mental health support and the professionals providing the service.

Definitions

- Mental health - according the World Health Organization (2010), mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.

- Psychological issues - issues that prevent an individual from coping with the normal stresses of everyday life, work productively, and making contributions to their environments (World, 2010).

- Sport psychologist - individual who is “concerned with the psychological foundations, processes, and consequences of the psychological regulation of sport-related activities of
one or several persons acting as the subject(s) of the activity. The focus may be on the behavior or on different psychological dimensions of human behavior” (Portenga, Aoyagi, Balague, Cohen & Harmison, pg.4).

- Counselor - a person who gives guidance in regards to mental health and psychological issues
- Larger Division II institution - The average Division II institution enrolls 4500 students, for this study, a larger Division II institution is categorized as an institution with over 10,000 students.

**Summary**

Student athletes are a distinct population on today’s college campus. These students face time constraints, lack of control over their schedules, and travel, as well as the academic pressures of the collegiate experience. While student athletes are at a greater risk to experience psychological issues than non-athletes, they are less likely to seek out professional help (Moulton, Molstad, & Turner, 1997). The purpose of this study was to better understand the feelings and perspectives of student athletes in relation to sport psychologists and counseling services.

This chapter has presented the reader with the background information necessary to understand the concepts discussed later in the study, as well as define the purpose of this study, along with limitations and assumptions. The next chapter delved further into information derived from the literature necessary to better understand the internal and external factors that affected how student athletes perceived mental health professionals and the support they provide.
Chapter Two  

Literature Review

Most students have attended college with the same goals and concerns, whether they were academic, emotional, or personal. However, student athletes have been a unique population on college campuses who experience additional stressors, demands, and challenges resulting from their involvement in intercollegiate athletics (Broughton & Neyer, 2001). There were predominate themes in the literature regarding student athletes and their perspectives regarding mental health support. These themes included the attitudes of student athletes towards seeking mental health support, student athlete perceptions based upon gender, challenges of working with student athletes, clinical mental health concerns, discussion of issues from the sports performance consultant perspective, and reporting of initial concerns by student athletes. This review addressed and described these themes and finally, summarized the current thinking in the field of student athlete mental health.

History of Mental Health and its Perception

This past year over 360,000 student athletes participated in NCAA sanctioned intercollegiate athletic programs. While most student athletes found their experience to be rewarding, an increased number of athletes were experiencing issues relating to adjustment, emotional concerns, and distress. It is estimated that between 10% and 15% of student athletes experienced psychological issues that were in need of counseling (Watson & Kissinger, 2007). This percentage placed student athletes at a greater risk than the general student population, in which about 8 to 9% experienced psychological issues that are in need of counseling (Watson & Kissinger, 2007).
Despite a greater risk for mental health issues, student athletes, in comparison with non-athletes, underused mental health services (Maniar, Curry, Sommers-Flanagan & Walsh, 2001). There were many reasons for this gap described in the literature. Results of a recent study indicated that student athletes simply do not believe that seeking consultation would be effective (Donohue, Dickens, Lancer, Covassain, Hash, Miller & Genet, 2004). Athletes grow up in an atmosphere filled with connotations of strength and mental toughness. Often times these connotations continued in their collegiate experiences. A study of athletic directors’ perceptions of sport psychologists revealed that while there was recognition of a need for assistance in general; participants thought that student athletes should be able to work through difficult times on their own (Wilson, Gilbert, Gilbert & Sailor, 2009). This attitude toward individual “toughness” created an atmosphere that favored silence over communication of issues.

While institutions provided counseling services to the entire student body, there was often reluctance on the part of student athletes to utilize these services. Martin, Akers, Jackson, Wrisberg, Nelson, Leslie, and Leidig (2001) defined counseling as “a working relationship between two individuals in which the counselor challenges the client to deal with problems by finding solutions based on the client’s own value system.” Today, counselors who have worked in an on campus counseling center have found it difficult to engage student athletes due to an inability to reach a level of comfort with the student athlete (Watson & Kissinger, 2007). This level of comfort could not be reached because the service providers may not understand the unique pressures, concerns, and needs of a student athlete (Maniar et al., 2001).

**Help Seeking Attitudes**

Student athlete past hesitancy toward utilizing on campus counseling services may also have been due to the high visibility of the location of the counseling center. Student athletes
have seen this visibility as a threat to their confidentiality or privacy (Broughton & Neyer, 2001). In a study done to assess students’ attitudes of student athletes attending a sport psychologist, it was shown that student athletes were seen differently by the general student body if they were seen seeking counseling services (Watson, 2005). This attitude greatly affected student athletes’ motivation to seek counseling. Student athletes did not want to be perceived as weak or in need of psychological help (Martin, Wrisberg, Beitel & Lounsbury, 1997). This often led student athletes to turn to coaches, teammates, trainers, family, and friends for help (Watson, 2003).

The perception of weakness was detrimental to an athlete’s mental image. This image has been built during the socialization into sport and throughout an athlete’s competitive career. It was important for consultants, whether they be sports psychologists, psychologists, or counselors, to understand and be aware of these unique characteristics of athletes (Martin, 2005). A student athlete would be able to build a trusting, working relationship with counselors who recognized, understood and accepted these characteristics (Watson, 2005).

The appearance and verbiage used by sport psychologists also played a role in the relationship built between student athlete and sport psychologist. Student athletes found it easier to connect to individuals who resembled a coach in terms of clothing and body type (Lubker, Visek, Geer & Watson). The language used by a sport psychologist also influenced the relationship between client and consultant. Jennifer Carter, a sport psychologist at Ohio State University, indicated that being able to use the language of a particular sport makes the consultant more approachable to the student athlete (Hosick, 2005). By understanding the perceptions and stigmas attached to seeking mental health support, sport psychologists could better design materials and information to educate student athletes and administrators on the benefits to seeking help (Maniar et al., 2001).
Student Athlete Clinical Mental Health Concerns

Recently there was a focus on student athletes’ mental health and their risk for experiencing difficulties. Research showed that student athletes were at a greater risk than their non-athlete counterparts to experience mental health problems such as alcohol abuse, social anxiety, and depression (Maniar, Chamberlain, & Moore, 2005). Student athletes were also at risk for suicide ideation. For many athletes, their identity as an individual was tied to their defining themselves as athletes. This became problematic if the individual suffered injury, was removed from their team, or exhausted their eligibility (Maniar, Chamberlain, & Moore, 2005).

Clinical mental health issues that included eating disorders, alcohol and substance abuse, and stress and anxiety management all occurred at the same or higher rates for student athletes in comparison to non-athletes. In females, eating disorders were found in much higher rates for athletes than non-athletes. Eight percent of student athletes suffered from bulimia in comparison to only 1-3% of their non-athlete counterparts. One and a half percent of student athletes suffered from anorexia in comparison to .5% in non-athletes (Gill, 2008). In regard to substance abuse, 80 to 90% of student athletes were found to consume alcohol. This rate was higher than the general student body; however, the more disturbing factor was that student athletes reported more negative alcohol-related incidents, such as driving under the influence, than non-athletes. It was also estimated that 10 to 20% of student athletes suffered from depression (Gill, 2008). These clinical psychological issues had the potential to catastrophically change a student-athlete’s life, including their athletic endeavors (Hosick, 2005). However, in spite of these statistics, there were no specific athlete-counseling competencies to guide clinical professionals interested in aiding student athletes (Ward, Sandstedt, Cox, & Beck, 2005).
Gender Specific Perspectives

While psychological issues had the potential to affect males and females at the same rate, there was a difference in the rate at which the two genders sought help. Recent findings showed that females expressed more positive views about counseling and were more likely to seek help in the counseling or sport psychology areas (Martin, 2005). The stigma associated with male athletes often deterred them from seeking or accepting counseling or sport psychology assistance (Martin et al., 2001).

Socialization that occurs through athletics often taught male athletes that in order to be “tough” and “be a man” they must accept pain and hardship in silence. While females often developed the mindset of accepting pain and hardship as well, they did not associate it with their identity as a woman, only as an athlete (Martin et al., 2001). These differences in gender perspectives produced challenges for professionals looking to assist athletes.

Challenges of Working with Student Athletes

As discussed previously, a major challenge in working with student athletes was the stigma attached to counseling or sport psychology services. Student athletes were hesitant to seek help due to the perceived closeness of sport psychology to mental health professionals and the fear of being seen as needing psychological assistance (Brooks & Bull, 1999). Being viewed as weak by their peers was a motivating factor to stay away from sport psychology services (Donohue et al., 2004).

Additional time constraints put on student athletes also had an impact on their decision and opportunities to seek personal help. The NCAA allowed for 20 hours of participation in activities linked to an intercollegiate sport a week. This did not include time student athletes must commit to the academic realm or a part time job (Watson, 2003). While non-athletes also
experienced time constraints, the difference was seen in the non-athletes’ general ability to manage their own schedules. Athletes, on the other hand, often had no control over the 20 hours of scheduled practice and team time a week (Jolly, 2008). With this in mind, increased access to services for those who need it, with recognition of time constraints, was of utmost importance (Hinkle, 1994).

In order to develop successful relationships, counselors and sport psychologists who worked with student athletes must recognize the individual and group differences that were characteristic of the athletic population (Hinkle, 1994). Previous research had shown that student athletes prefer to seek help from coaches, athletic trainers, family, and friends before sport psychologists (Maniar et al., 2001). The misunderstanding between student athletes and sport psychologists led to many missed opportunities to assist in student athlete development.

Student athletes expected counselors and sport psychologists to be trained and knowledgeable in the challenges and demands of their lifestyle (Watson, 2005). Without this understanding, it would be difficult for trust to be built between the student athlete and the counselor. Building this level of understanding did not rest solely on the shoulders of the consultant and the client. Student affairs professionals as well as the athletic department had a responsibility to provide outreach and services to both students and student athletes; in order to do this effectively, the unique challenges and needs of student athletes must be recognized (Watson, 2005).

**Sport Performance Consultant Perspective**

A common misconception about sport psychologists was that their sole purpose is to improve athletic performance. While this was a large part of their job, sport psychologists were also prepared to deal with personal and clinical mental health issues of student athletes (Hosick,
These individuals were trained to diagnose and treat mental health issues while introducing, training, and applying mental health techniques to an athlete’s every day and competitive life (Hosick, 2005). This comprehensive approach allowed sport psychologists to truly engage with student athletes, on a personal level and from a competitive standpoint, while they worked to improve the student athlete as a whole.

Recently, considerable progress had been made in recognizing characteristics viewed as necessary for effective consulting between student athletes and sport psychologists (Sharp & Hodge, 2011). However, despite a holistic approach, sport psychologists did not always agree with student athletes as to what an effective approach would be. In a study comparing characteristics that student athletes viewed as important to a counseling relationship and characteristics that sport psychologists saw as beneficial, vast differences were observed. First and foremost, student athletes placed high regard on sport psychology consultants (hereafter referred to as SPCs) having been trained and qualified in athletic related material, while SPCs did not place this characteristic in high regard. A second difference was in the area of athletic background. Student athletes valued a SPC who had experience in competitive athletics in order to be relatable, however SPCs did not see this factor as important (Lubker et al.). These differences were important to understand the relationship building process in order to achieve effective communication between SPCs and student athletes.

While student athletes were at greater risk of experiencing psychological issues than non-athletes, they were less likely to seek out professional help (Moulton, Molstad, & Turner, 1997). A reluctance to seek help outside an athletic department stemmed from the belief that their needs and daily challenges would not be understood, as well as, from their fear of lack of privacy (Broughton & Neyer, 2001). These fears produced a situation in which the initial contact may
need to have been made by the consultant themselves. In the hope of reducing the fear of seeking psychological help, it may have also been helpful to provide information to student athletes on the benefits of such consultation (Donohue et al., 2004). In order for this to be possible there must be a pipeline of communication between athletic departments and providers of mental health services, whether they are on campus or outsourced.

**Summary**

As the literature suggested, the student athletes’ collegiate experience was unique. However, this did not make them exempt from the difficulties that can be caused by a mental health issue. In order to better understand the student athlete perspective on mental health at a Division II institution this study delved into the meanings behind the words sport psychologist and psychologist. The literature indicated that student athletes were generally hesitant to seek help for mental health issues. However, it was also clear from the literature that clinical health issues were more prevalent among student athletes than in the general student population. In order to respond to the mental health needs of student athletes, SPCs must better understand the challenges of working with student athletes as well as understand their expectations of counseling. As stated by Broughton and Neyer (2001), “although some challenges are not unique to the student athlete population, they are unique when put within the context of the student athlete identity development and environment.”

This chapter provided background information, derived from literature, to aid in understanding the factors that influence student athletes’ perception of mental health professionals and the services they provide. The next chapter described how the study took place, including setting, participants, and data analysis.
Chapter Three

Research Design

As student athletes develop throughout their college careers it is important that they be provided with support in all aspects of their life. The purpose of this study was to better understand the feelings and perspectives of student athletes in relation to sport psychologists and counseling services. This chapter will describe the setting and participants that were studied, the development of the survey used, and the process that was used to gather and analyze the data.

Setting

This study was conducted at a large NCAA Division II institution located in the northern United States. The student body of this institution contained approximately 11,800 students, of which about 400 are student athletes. The survey was conducted during scheduled team meetings or practice time as not to interfere with schedules or cause further time constraints.

Participants

Forty-five student athletes were selected using a random number table. Student athletes were divided by sports and teams were chosen through random number sampling until there are approximately 25 males and 20 females. Following the random sampling, permission to notify participants was sought from the athletic department administration and coaches.

Once the participants were chosen, they were notified of the option to participate in an anonymous survey. Student athletes were not required to participate, and there were no incentives for those who chose to participate. Each participant was read a consent form before their formal participation in the survey, and again at that time could choose not to participate.
Research Questions

The review of literature showed a lack of information about student athlete perceptions that led the researcher to form the following research questions: What were the most important factors that influence the student athlete perception of mental health professionals? How did student athlete perception of mental health professionals impact the student athlete desire to seek mental health support?

Methodology

This study was conducted using a quantitative approach. Student athletes were surveyed, using a 5 point likert scale, in order to discover how perceptions influence help seeking attitudes.

Research Design

While there were many surveys in place to measure perceptions of mental health and student athletes such as the Treatment Evaluation Inventory and the Athlete Preference Questionnaire, they did not address the five main categories of this study (Maniar et al., 2001). In this case, a survey was designed based on a 5 point likert scale, containing 20 questions grouped into five categories. The five categories were focused on the perceptions of student athletes concerning on campus mental health services, factors that influenced student athlete perception of mental health in general, the individuals student athletes sought out to discuss mental health issues, student athlete perception of sport psychologist services, and student athlete help seeking attitudes.

Participating student athletes were asked to complete the survey during a scheduled team practice or team meeting. At the time of the survey, a consent form was read and student athletes could decide to not participate in the study. Students were asked to complete the survey as well as provide some demographic information including, collegiate year, gender, and completed year
of collegiate sport participation. This survey was conducted using only undergraduate students over the age of 18. All extra surveys or surveys that were not fully completed were removed from the study and destroyed.

The survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete. Once completed there was an envelope to place each survey in. This ensured confidentiality and eased participation concern for the student athletes. Surveys that were completed remained in the envelope in a locked drawer until ready to be analyzed, and then kept for a year in the locked file after which they were destroyed.

**Analysis**

Once all surveys were completed, the raw data was analyzed with descriptive statistics. The data was broken down and analyzed using SPSS 20.0.0 software. Each response on the survey was coded from one to five as interval data. Initial analysis began with computing the mode for each subgroup and question. This allowed for results based on frequency of response and a display of the distribution. Following this computation, the mean and median were determined. This allowed for an understanding of the averages of the answers provided on the survey.

**Summary**

The population of student athletes, while unique, was not individual in its type of thought as student athletes. This study attempted to provide information regarding how student athletes as a whole perceive mental health professionals and their treatment. The survey designed for this study allowed for individual interpretation of an issue that is affecting an entire population of university students. The results provided opportunity to better understand and aid student athletes in their own understanding of themselves and their mental health.
This chapter discussed the research design of the study and broke down the methodology, setting, population, and data analysis. The next chapter reported the results of the study and further discussed the results in relation to the purpose and research questions.
Chapter Four

Results

As student athletes grow and progress through their careers, it is important their needs are fully understood. The purpose of this study was to aid in the understanding of the feelings and perspectives of student athletes in regards to their interpretations of sports psychologists and counseling services. The study was conducted using a 20 question survey administered to undergraduate student athletes, 18 years of age and over, during a scheduled team practice or team meeting.

The survey focused on five categories in order to concentrate on the research questions of what are the most important factors that influence the student athlete perception of mental health professionals and how does student athlete perception of mental health professionals impact the student athlete desire to seek mental health support. The five categories included perceptions of student athletes concerning on campus mental health services, factors that influence student athlete perception of mental health in general, the individuals student athletes seek out to discuss mental health issues, student athlete perception of sport psychologist services, and student athlete help seeking attitudes. The surveys, once completed, were analyzed using an SPSS system. This chapter will detail the results of the surveys, broken down by category.

Findings

Overall a total of 45 surveys were completed by student athletes, 20 by females and 25 by males, over the age of 18 and participating in an intercollegiate sport. The student athletes who completed this survey made up the volleyball, baseball, and women’s basketball teams at a large Division II institution in the northern United States. The overall survey contained 20 questions related to five categories. Student athletes were asked to identify their gender, completed year of
sport participation, and year in schooling. The purpose of the survey was to gain knowledge and understanding of student athlete perceptions of sport psychologists and counseling services at Division II institutions.

**Perceptions of student athletes concerning on campus mental health services.**

Student athletes were asked to demonstrate their knowledge and perception of the on campus mental health services center through a series of five questions. These questions pertained to the logistics of the services provided, location, and times the mental health services center is available, as well as to the student athlete’s willingness to use these services. Of the 45 student athletes surveyed 80% had not previously used services provided by the mental health services center on campus (see Table 1). Only 8.9% identified as having used services provided by the on campus mental health services center.

A small percentage of student athletes, 8.9%, knew where the on-campus mental health services center was located but none of the student athletes surveyed indicated they knew the hours the services were available. Of the 45 student athletes surveyed, 62.2% did not know where the mental health services center on campus was located.

Despite this lack of logistical knowledge of the on campus mental health services center, 42.2% of the student athletes surveyed did not feel that their athletic commitments, along with academic commitments, would make it difficult to use mental health services on campus. Only a small percentage of student athletes, 2.2%, felt their athletic and academic commitments would make pursuing mental health services on campus difficult. The student athletes surveyed were asked to identify if they would be uncomfortable if fellow student athletes saw them using mental health services. Of the 45 student athletes surveyed, 42.2% felt they would be uncomfortable, while 28.9% of the population did not have any feelings on the statement, and
28.9% of the student athletes surveyed were comfortable with others seeing them seek mental health services.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) I have used services provided by the on-campus mental health services center</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) I know where the on-campus mental health services center is located</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>62.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) If I had the need to access mental health services on campus, I know the hours it is available</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>75.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) I feel as though my athletic commitments, along with my academic commitments, would make it difficult for me to use mental health services on campus</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) I would be uncomfortable if fellow student athletes saw me, or knew I was using mental health services</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentages based upon responses by 45 student athletes

**Student athlete perception of mental health and athletics.** In relation to the concepts of mental health and athletics, student athletes were asked five questions to evaluate their perceptions and understandings of the topics. Fifty-four percent of student athletes surveyed felt that mental health issues were prevalent in the athletic population (See Table 2). In relation to this finding, 58% of student athletes saw mental health professionals as an asset to student athletes.

There was conclusive evidence throughout this study that student athletes felt if a mental health professional was familiar with sports or the daily life of a student athlete they were better able to assist the student athlete as a whole. Eighty-two percent of the student athletes surveyed felt that if a mental health professional was familiar with sports in general they would be of
better assistance. In addition, 89% of the student athletes surveyed indicated that if a mental health professional was familiar with sports and the daily life of a student athlete they would be of better assistance. In accordance with the idea that seeking mental health support could negatively affect the perception of an athlete being mentally strong, there was an even distribution between confirmation and neutral feedback. Forty percent of the student athletes surveyed felt seeking mental health support could negatively affect their being seen as mentally strong, while 40% of student athletes were neutral to the idea.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Athlete Perception of Mental Health and Athletics</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) I believe mental health issues are prevalent in the athletic population</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) I believe mental health professionals are an asset to student athletes</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) I feel that if a mental health professional is familiar with sports in general they can better assist me as a student athlete</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) I feel that if a mental health professional is familiar with the daily life of a student athlete, including travel, practice, games, study tables, etc., they can better assist me</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) I feel that being seen as mentally strong is important and seeking mental health services may negatively affect that perception</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages based upon responses by 45 student athletes

Who student athletes seek out to discuss mental health issues. There was a common consensus in the thoughts of student athletes that they are comfortable speaking to their athletic trainer and parents, family, friends, etc., before their coaching staff. Almost 50% percent of student athletes were most comfortable speaking to their family and friends about mental health
issues (See Table 3). Fewer than 18% of student athletes expressed comfort in speaking to their coaching staff about mental health issues. Besides speaking to family and friends, student athletes showed a wide array and distribution of responses to discussing mental health issues with an athletic trainer or coaching staff members.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who Student Athletes Seek Out to Discuss Mental Health Issues</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) As a student athlete, I am comfortable talking about mental health issues with my athletic trainer</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) As a student athlete, I am comfortable talking about mental health issues with my coaches</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) As a student athlete, I am most comfortable talking about mental health issues with my family and friends</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages based upon responses by 45 student athletes

**Student athlete perception of sport psychology services.** This segment of questions was designed to evaluate how student athletes perceive and define services provided by a sport psychologist. Student athletes were asked to identify their feelings on whether or not a sport psychologist would be beneficial in their athletic department and if they would actively seek their assistance. Sixty-two percent of student athletes identified as finding a sport psychologist as beneficial to an athletic department. Despite this majority, only 33.4% responded that they would actively seek the assistance of a sport psychologist if available within their athletic department (See Table 4).

In relation to speaking with a sport psychologist, 57.8% of the student athletes indicated they would be more comfortable speaking to a sport psychologist than with another mental health professional about mental health issues (See Table 4). None of the student athletes
surveyed disagreed with the idea of speaking to a sport psychologist instead of with another mental health professional. However, 62.2% of student athletes understand a sport psychologist as being able to primarily aid in performance enhancement. This showed a relationship between the term “sport psychologist” and a comfort level with student athletes.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) I feel as though a sport psychologist can primarily aid in performance enhancement</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) If a sport psychologist were available in my athletic department I would actively seek their assistance</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) I think a sport psychologist would be beneficial in my athletic department</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) I would be more comfortable discussing mental health issues with a sport psychologist than with another mental health professional</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) As a student athlete, I think having a mental health professional available in my athletic department would increase availability and access, improving my chances of seeking their help</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages based upon responses by 45 student athletes

**Student athlete help seeking attitudes.** Student athletes were asked a series of two questions to evaluate their attitudes toward seeking help in the area of mental health. The main focus of this section was to identify the comfort level of student athletes seeking help within the athletic department and outside the athletic department. This section also focused on the attitude of student athletes toward mental health in general. In response to the statement regarding seeking mental health assistance within the athletic department, 68.9% of student athletes would prefer to speak to someone within the athletic department (See Table 5). Only 11.1% of the
student athletes surveyed felt they would be more comfortable speaking with someone outside their athletic department. In response to the statement that seeking mental health support is only for severe mental health issues, 40% of student athletes felt that this was an inaccurate assessment (See Table 5).

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Athlete Help Seeking Attitudes</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) If I needed mental health assistance I would prefer to speak to someone within my athletic department</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) I believe seeking mental health support is only for severe mental health issues</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages based upon responses by 45 student athletes

Summary

Overall, the data indicated a positive view of sport psychologists and their work within athletic departments, while showing hesitancy towards mental health support in general. These statistics supported the idea, provided by the literature on the topics, that the student athlete experience is indeed unique. Statistically speaking, this study showed agreement and disagreement to some key factors to the literature. These differences and agreements will be discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter Five

Discussion, Educational Implications, and Recommendations

Discussion

Research has shown that of the 360,000 student athletes that participated in NCAA sanctioned intercollegiate athletic programs, an estimated 10 to 15 percent, 2 percent higher than non-athletes, will experience psychological issues severe enough to warrant counseling (Watson & Kissinger, 2007). However, despite these statistics student athletes were less likely than their non-athlete counterparts to seek mental health support for psychological issues (Maniar et al., 2001). Student athletes were separated from their non-athlete peers by identifying their additional stressors, demands, and challenges that arose from involvement in intercollegiate athletic participation (Broughton & Neyer, 2001).

The author chose to look further into a gap in research involving student athletes and their perception of mental health support, specifically their perceptions of sport psychologists and counseling services. The researcher sought to find the factors and perceptions that influence student athlete desire to seek mental health support from specified mental health professionals.

Perceptions of student athletes concerning on campus mental health services.

Student athletes grow up in an atmosphere that is dedicated to strength and mental toughness, which continues into their collegiate experiences. This attitude towards individual “toughness” creates an atmosphere that favors silence over communication of issues. Broughton and Neyer (2001) stated that student athletes were thought less of if they were seen seeking counseling services. However, in this study the results of a similar statement assessing student athlete views of seeking mental health support were inconclusive. Student athletes were asked to identify on a 5-point likert scale what their comfort level would be if fellow student athletes saw them or knew
they were seeking mental health services. While 42.2% agreed they would be uncomfortable if fellow student athletes knew they were seeking mental health services, 28.9% were neutral on the idea and 28.9% disagreed with the statement.

Despite these reasonable perceptions toward the idea of using mental health services, only 8.9% of student athletes surveyed knew where the on campus mental health services center was located and none of the student athletes surveyed knew the hours the services were available. Furthermore, only 6.7% of the student athletes surveyed agreed to having used mental health services previously. These percentages in comparison to the percentages provided by Watson and Kissinger (2007) that 10 to 15 percent of student athletes experience psychological issues in need of counseling, these results support the idea that student athletes underused mental health services.

**Student athlete perception of mental health and athletics.** Despite their perceived unwillingness to seek mental health support, 43.3% student athletes identified that mental health issues were prevalent in athletics. The student athletes surveyed further acknowledged the idea that if mental health professionals were familiar with sports or the daily life of a student athlete they were better able to assist. This supported the ideas of Maniar et al. (2001) which stated it may be difficult for a level of comfort to be reached between service providers and student athletes due to a lack of understanding of the unique pressures, concerns, and needs of the student athlete. Furthermore, it supported the findings of Broughton & Neyer (2001), who identified a reluctance of student athletes to seek help outside an athletic department which stemmed from the belief that their needs and daily challenges would not be understood.

While student athletes in this study were concerned with being understood, they were less apprehensive with the opinions of others if they were to seek mental health support. Forty
percent of the student athletes surveyed indicated they were neutral about the statement, *I feel that being seen as mentally strong is important and seeking mental health services may negatively affect that perception.* This refutes the findings of Martin, Wrisberg, Beitel & Lounsbury (1997), who found that student athletes’ motivation to seek counseling was greatly affected by their desires to not be perceived as weak or in need of psychological help.

**Who student athletes seek out to discuss mental health issues.** Student athletes in this survey were more comfortable seeking help from their athletic trainer or family and friends rather than a member of their coaching staff. This lack of desire to confide in their coaching staff leads to a question of trust and putting the game before the individual. In today’s athletic atmosphere of toughness and focus on victory, it is often thought that student athletes should be able to work through difficult times on their own (Wilson et al., 2009). This attitude of forced independence is turning student athletes away from their coaching staffs and towards either family and friends or other members of the athletic department, whether there is a mental health professional available or not.

**Student athlete perception of sport psychology services.** A common misconception in regards to sport psychologists was their sole purpose was to improve athletic performance. While this is a large part of the job, sport psychologists were also prepared to deal with personal and clinical mental health issues of student athletes (Hosick, 2005). The findings of this survey supported the common misconception of the purpose of a sport psychologist. Of the 45 student athletes surveyed, 62% of them felt that a sport psychologist would primarily aid in their performance enhancement. Interestingly, while almost 63% of student athletes surveyed felt a sport psychologist would be beneficial to their athletic department, over 57% felt they would be more comfortable speaking to a sport psychologist than any other mental health professional,
and acknowledged having a mental health professional inside the athletic department would increase availability and access, only 33.4% of student athletes surveyed agreed that if a sport psychologist were available within their athletic department they would actively seek their assistance. This supported the claim by Brooks and Bull in 2001 that student athletes were hesitant to seek help due to the perceived closeness of sport psychology to mental health professionals and the fear of being seen as needing psychological assistance. While the student athletes of this survey did not overly identify as being concerned of being perceived as weak, there is a missing link between the availability of a mental health professional and their willingness to actively seek assistance.

**Student athlete help seeking attitudes.** Student athletes were asked to identify their comfort level of seeking mental health support within their athletic department or outside their athletic department. Of the 45 student athletes surveyed, 68.9% preferred to seek help within their athletic department. This supports the findings of Watson & Kissinger (2007), Mamiar et al. (2001), and Watson (2005), who all identified a hesitancy of student athletes to seek mental health support from an outside source due to the fear of not being understood and their needs not being met. Providers of mental health services, outside of an athletic department, must be able to understand the unique pressures and concerns in order to meet the needs of a student athlete (Mamiar et al., 2001).

**Educational Implications**

In accordance with increased focus on the mental health of student athletes in recent years, this study has provided an insight into the perceptions of student athletes in regard to mental health support at Division II institutions. This study has shown the importance of understanding the needs of student athletes and how their unique circumstances shape each
individual and their experience. The perception of mental health support within and outside an athletic department will allow for a better plan in order to ensure each student athletes’ needs are met. By understanding the perceptions and stigmas attached to seeking mental health support, sport psychologists can better design materials and information to educate student athletes and administrators on the benefits to seeking help (Maniar et al., 2001).

**Recommendation for Future Research**

Literature has shown a gap in research executed at each level of collegiate competition. Perceptions of student athletes, in relation to mental health support, have been well documented at the Division I level. However, the remaining divisions of the NCAA and other collegiate levels are still left to be examined. The time constraints, ideologies, and size of schools differ significantly between the three levels of NCAA competition and understanding the needs of student athletes in each is important to providing adequate support (National, 2011).

It is recommended that further research take place across the NCAA divisions. As this is conducted, a better understanding can be reached as to the communication between athletic departments and their student athletes in regard to mental health support. Through a study of communication patterns and perceptions of student athletes in relation to the communication received, an understanding can be reached as to what the missing link of confidence in mental health support is.

Further research could be pursued focused on the impact of mental health support on additional sports. The focus of this study was on baseball, volleyball, and women’s basketball. Arguably, the sports of baseball and volleyball have more focus on finesse than on aggression and toughness. By further focusing on sports such as hockey or football, the responses and findings could vary. Through a study of different sport ideologies further understanding could
be reached on the necessities of communication and perception of student athletes toward mental health support.

**Conclusion**

Every year over 360,000 student athletes participate in NCAA sanctioned intercollegiate athletic programs. Student affairs professionals, as well as, athletic departments have a responsibility to provide outreach and services to both students and student athletes (Watson, 2005). This study showed a lack of communication being the most important factor in relation to student athlete perception of mental health professionals. Student athletes must be provided with current and thorough information about the services offered by their athletic department and university in relation to mental health support.

Furthermore, as evidenced by the results of this study and the desire of student athletes to stay within their athletic departments to discuss mental health issues, athletic departments should consider hiring mental health professionals to deal specifically with the presenting issues unique to student athletes. While the challenges faced by student athletes may be faced by both student athletes and the general student body, it is the context of the environment in which the athletes encounter these challenges that make them distinctive (Broughton and Neyer, 2001). In order to provide adequate mental health support for student athletes, athletic departments must ensure that student athletes fully understand the services available to them and how to access it. The communication of this information begins at the top and must conform and adapt to each student athlete and their unique challenges and needs.
References


National Collegiate Athletic Association.(2011, March 31). Differences among three divisions: Division II. Retrieved December 24, 2011, from NCAA: http://www.ncaa.org/wps/wcm/connect/public/ncaa/about+the+ncaa/who+we+are/diffrences+among+the+divisions/division+ii/about+division+ii


Appendix A

INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH

Student Athlete Perception of Mental Health Support at Division II Institutions

You are invited to be in a research study of the perception of student athletes in accordance to the mental health support at Division II institutions. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a participant on a sanctioned intercollegiate athletics team and are over the age of 18.

This study is being conducted by: Amy Sandstrom, Graduate student in the Education Department

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would you ask you to do the following things:

You will be asked to fill out a 20 question survey in regards to your perception of mental health support at your Division II institution. This survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to records.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota or the University of Minnesota Duluth. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is: Amy Sandstrom. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact them at 38B SpHC, by phone at (402) 651-0258, or email at sands219@d.umn.edu. Or, if you would like to contact my advisor, Randy Hyman, you may do so at rhyman@d.umn.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Research Subjects’ Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records
Appendix B
Research Study

Demographic Information

Gender: M F
Collegiate Year: Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior
Completed Year of Collegiate Sport Participation: 1 2 3 4 5

Student Athlete Perception of Mental Health Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) I have used services provided by the on-campus mental health services center</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) I know where the on-campus mental health services center is located</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) If I had the need to access mental health support on campus, I know the hours it is available</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) I feel as though my athletic commitments, along with my academic commitments, would make it difficult for me to use mental health services provided on campus</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) I would be uncomfortable if fellow student athletes saw me, or knew I was using mental health services</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) I believe mental health issues are prevalent in the athletic population</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) I believe mental health professionals are an asset to student athletes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) I feel that if a mental health professional is familiar with</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sports in general they can better assist me as a student athlete</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) I feel that if a mental health professional is familiar with the daily</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>life of a student athlete, including travel, practice, games, study tables,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>etc., they can better assist me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) I feel that being seen as mentally strong is important and seeking</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mental health services may negatively affect that perception of me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11) As a student athlete, I am comfortable talking about mental health</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>issues with my athletic trainer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12) As a student athlete, I am comfortable talking about mental health</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>issues with my coaches</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13) As a student athlete, I am most comfortable talking about mental</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>health issues with my family and friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14) I feel as though a sport psychologist can primarily aid in</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>performance enhancement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15) If a sport psychologist were available in my athletic department I</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>would actively seek their assistance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16) I think a sport psychologist would be beneficial in my athletic</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>department</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17) I would be more comfortable discussing mental health issues with</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a sport psychologist than with another mental health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18) As a student athlete I think having a mental health professional available in my athletic department would increase availability and access, improving my chances of seeking their help</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19) If I needed mental health assistance I would prefer to speak to someone in my athletic department</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20) I believe seeking mental health support is only for severe mental health issues</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

IRB Letter of Approval

The IRB: Human Subjects Committee determined that the referenced study is exempt from review under federal guidelines 45 CFR Part 46.101 (b) category #2 SURVEYS/INTERVIEWS; STANDARDIZED EDUCATIONAL TESTS; OBSERVATION OF PUBLIC BEHAVIOR.

Study Number: 1204E12923

Principal Investigator: Amy Sandstrom

Title(s):
Student Athlete Perception of Mental Health Support at Division II Institutions

This e-mail confirmation is your official University of Minnesota RSPP notification of exemption from full committee review. You will not receive a hard copy or letter.

This secure electronic notification between password protected authentications has been deemed by the University of Minnesota to constitute a legal signature.

The study number above is assigned to your research. That number and the title of your study must be used in all communication with the IRB office.

Research that involves observation can be approved under this category without obtaining consent.

SURVEY OR INTERVIEW RESEARCH APPROVED AS EXEMPT UNDER THIS CATEGORY IS LIMITED TO ADULT SUBJECTS.

This exemption is valid for five years from the date of this correspondence and will be filed inactive at that time. You will receive a notification prior to inactivation. If this research will extend beyond five years, you must submit a new application to the IRB before the study’s expiration date.
Upon receipt of this email, you may begin your research. If you have questions, please call the IRB office at (612) 626-5654.

You may go to the View Completed section of eResearch Central at http://eresearch.umn.edu/ to view further details on your study.

The IRB wishes you success with this research.

We have created a short survey that will only take a couple of minutes to complete. The questions are basic but will give us guidance on what areas are showing improvement and what areas we need to focus on: