

Invited Speaker Abstract

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Title of Presentation

Health Promotion for People with Intellectual Disabilities at Special Olympics (SO)

1. Abstract

Special Olympics (SO) is a global sports organisation for people with intellectual disabilities (ID) that also has a comprehensive offer beyond sports. SO gives more than 5 million people with intellectual disabilities worldwide the opportunity to make self-determined choices, both disability specific as well as inclusive offers. This includes the Healthy Athletes Program, which aims not only to promote health but also to strengthen the health literacy of people with ID.

Due to their higher vulnerability to health problems, people with ID need to activate resources and strengthen existing capabilities. In order to take responsibility for their own health, they need help and support in various forms: information, motivation, memory, guidance and practical assistance. Healthy Athletes provides target-group-specific, free consultations and check-ups. It also helps to improve prevention and health promotion and to overcome health inequalities. The low-threshold offerings during international, national and regional SO sports competitions, in sheltered workshops or living homes are carried out in seven medical areas. The screenings are supported by specially trained volunteer physicians and allied health professionals.

Health Promotion, a discipline of Special Olympics Healthy Athletes, focuses on healthy living, healthy lifestyle choices, and nation-specific health issues. Health Promotion offers screenings for blood pressure, health habits, and weight status. The results show that nearly 40% of the participants are overweight. Therefore, nutrition plays a central role in our program. Health Promotion uses interactive educational tools and displays, motivational literature and demonstrations to raise awareness about the need to improve and maintain an enhanced level of self-care and healthy eating.

We will present experiences especially in the field of nutrition and health education, training opportunities for dietitians and dietetic students working with a team of health professionals and information on health measures.

2. key references

<https://resources.specialolympics.org/health/>

<https://www.specialolympics.org/our-work/inclusive-health>

3. key messages