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Increasing para-athletes' access to sport psychology

Although para-athletes benefit from psychological skills training (PST) (Martin, 2005), many have limited opportunities to access these services (Dieffenbach & Statler, 2012). Further, applied intervention research in this area is sparse. As such, the purpose of this research program is to deliver and evaluate a longitudinal PST program for athletes with a physical disability. This free online program (see learnpst.com) consists of eight interactive learning modules on topics such as goal setting, imagery, concentration, and relaxation. Data collection and participant recruitment are ongoing, descriptive statistics from our pre-intervention questionnaire are presented here. To date, participants include 27 para-athletes (female $n = 20$, male $n = 7$; Mage = 34.34 years, SD = 12.70) from a variety of geographic regions nationally (Canadian provinces $n = 6$) and internationally (countries $n = 5$). These para-athletes engage in a variety of sports and compete across recreational and international levels; however, 63% have no previous experience with sport psychology. In addition, preliminary data indicate that participants are completing modules within 30 minutes, on average. Taken together, these data demonstrate the potential for this online PST program to reach para-athletes across a breadth of experiences; serving as an accessible option for para-athletes to pursue PST.
