ABSTRACT

Dietary Supplement Use According to Health-Related Behavior Covariates in SQT and CQT Students
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Currently, 43% of the US population reports using dietary supplements (DS), with Special Operation Forces (SOF) personnel reporting much higher use, Special Forces (77.1%), Navy SEALs (78%) and Army Rangers (81.5%). It is imperative to examine DS use in SEAL Qualification Training (SQT) and Crewman Qualification Training (CQT) students given the Institute of Medicine’s charge to track military DS use and how students’ DS use patterns may differ, and identify potential risks. **PURPOSE:** To determine the health-related behavior covariates of DS use in SQT and CQT students. **METHODS:** SQT (N = 291) and CQT (N = 167) students completed a detailed health-related behaviors and DS use questionnaire. Odds ratios and Fisher’s exact tests were used to examine associations between SQT and CQT students’ DS use and their health-related behaviors. **RESULTS:** Dietary supplement prevalence was 85.6% in SQT and CQT students combined, 88.7% in SQT students and 80.2% in CQT students. In SQT and CQT students combined smokeless tobacco use (OR 3.07, 95% CI 1.55 – 6.05, Fisher’s exact test p = 0.001), high MET hours/week (median cut-point) strength training (OR 1.81, 95% CI 1.05 – 3.12, Fisher’s exact test p = 0.042) and caffeinated beverage intake (OR 2.60, 95% CI 1.53 – 4.41, Fisher’s exact test p = 0.001) was associated with DS use. Examining student groups separately, smokeless tobacco use in CQT (OR 2.76, 95% CI 1.16 – 6.58 Fisher’s exact test p = 0.019) and SQT (OR 5.03, 95% CI 1.49 – 16.95, Fisher’s exact test p = 0.004) and caffeinated beverage intake in CQT (OR 2.54, 95% CI 1.17 – 5.51 Fisher’s exact test p = 0.025) and SQT (OR 2.42, 95% CI 1.16 – 5.08, Fisher’s exact test p = 0.023) students was associated with DS use. **CONCLUSION:** Self-reported DS use in SQT and CQT students was higher than DS use in SOF and the US population. In SQT and CQT students, DS use was associated with high MET hours/week strength training, caffeinated beverage intake and smokeless tobacco use. Combining DS use with consuming caffeine and smokeless tobacco increases potential adverse reactions to DS, especially DS with proprietary blend ingredients. Future efforts should continue to examine the relationship between DS use and risky lifestyle habits that may compromise the health and military preparedness of SOF students. **Supported by the Office of Naval Research, Grant # N00014-11-1-0929.**