

ABSTRACT- Nutrition

Background: SO Healthy Athletes began offering free health screenings and education to Special Olympics athletes. Goals for the next 5 years include offering additional activities focused on disease prevention and/or health promotion. With obesity a major contributor to disease and disability the availability of food at SO events provides an opportunity to model healthy food choices. To date, SO programs in the US do not have food and beverage policies or guidelines for SO games, and often rely on donations from national and local food vendors to feed athletes. Therefore, we provided evidence based data connecting athlete performance with health to support a need to change the food environment in the SO population.

Methods: Formative research; including literature reviews, needs assessment, and key informant interviews were completed.

Results: White paper summarizing evidenced based literature.

Conclusion: A paradigm shift is needed where sustainably produced, high quality food is both supplied and demanded and is essential for the development of a sustainable food system; one where healthy and nutritious food is accessible to SO communities.

ABSTRACT - Opening Eyes

Background: Special Olympics International (SOI) has provided eye assessments at no cost to athletes, crucial given the high rates of eye abnormalities found in studies from games in other countries. To this date, no studies have been published on athletes specifically within the United States. Therefore, this multiple cross-sectional study hopes to investigate the vision profile of U.S. athletes.

Methods: Vision assessments were conducted in the U.S. national games of 2010, 2014, and 2018. Demographic and clinical data from 1427 vision assessments were used.

Results: In our cohort with mean age \pm SD of 29.8 ± 11.5 years, 85.3% had an abnormal vision result, with at least one of the following findings: vision impairment (31.0%), refractive error including myopia (52.8%), hypermetropia (15.7%), and astigmatism (35.0%), ocular misalignment distant (16.2%) or near (17.2%), or ocular abnormality (19.1%).

Conclusion: This study demonstrates the burden of vision defects and ocular disease in U.S. SOI athletes over the past decade.