

Body Mass Index, Visual Acuity and Hearing Status of Special Olympics Athletes in Sarawak

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ABSTRACT

Introduction	Children and young adult with intellectual disability has different health care needs. Often, they are not accessible to standard health care available in the community for various reasons. Special Olympics (SO) Inc. is a sports organization for people with intellectual disability to actively engage in Olympics-type sports and participate in competition. SO Inc. provides Healthy Athletes Program [®] (HAP) which is a partnership program between the community and health professionals in screening and providing health education to SO athletes.
Objective	To document the Body Mass Index (BMI), visual acuity and hearing status of children and young adult with intellectual disability in Special Olympics Sarawak.
Methods	Health data were collected by trained health professionals under HAP held in conjunction with Sarawak Special Olympics State Games between 17-18 April 2010. The health data presented in this paper include the athletes' weight, height, BMI, fat disposition, ear canal screen and hearing status (otoacoustic emission screen, tympanometry screen, pure tone screen), health and nutritional habit, as well as eye health and visual acuity.
Results	195 athletes attended the State Games in 2010, of which 148 were screened. Results of the health screen were analyzed and presented using standard statistical tests.
Discussion	People with intellectual disability accounts for 3% of the population worldwide. In Sarawak, this figure could be as high as 60,000, if not more. They are encouraged to take part in sports events held by Special Olympics Sarawak. State Games are being organized every 2 years, and this offer a good opportunity to screen the athletes for health related problems. Early intervention and awareness of obesity help the family to recognize the possible later complication and correction of visual and hearing impairment can help improve the quality of life and sports performance of the athletes.
Conclusions	Health screening conducted during the HAP is a useful screening program in this population. Health data collected can bring awareness to athletes and their family, and corrective measures in hearing and visual impairment can be taken immediately.