

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **On the importance of recognizing “female athlete triad”**

ZAGREB – In an article published in the new issue of the Croatian Medical Journal, a group of Croatian orthopedists has pointed out the importance of early recognition of “female athlete triad” which consists of anorexia, amenorrhea and osteoporosis.

Syndrome, first described and termed in 1992 by the American College of Sports Medicine, usually begins with disordered eating, and over the time low energy intake shuts down the hypothalamic-pituitary-ovarian hormonal axis. This leads to menstrual disorders and hypoestrogenism, which is ultimately responsible for decreased bone mineral density, osteoporosis, and an increased risk of stress fractures.

In their review article, authors Alan Ivković, Miljenko Franić, Ivan Bojanić and Marko Pećina described psychological difficulties of female athletes in Western culture, which as always considered athletic participation to be a man’s thing. Achievement, aggressiveness, and desire to win and conquer were traditionally considered as masculine not feminine qualities. The widespread belief is that the winning male athlete has just proved his masculinity, whereas the winning female often needs to justify her femininity. Such prejudices, in combination with personality traits, may lead to depression and anxiety episodes because a female athlete may feel she is not up to the perceived expectations of her sex.

Female athletes are sometime pressured by their parents and coaches to win at all costs which, together with social isolation caused by intensive involvement in sports, may increase the risk for developing certain problems such as eating disorders.

Authors of the article emphasize the importance of educating “athletes, coaches, physicians, and parents about the female athlete triad, so that they can readily recognize the symptoms and potential risks associated with this condition.”

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