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## Strategies to fuel Paralympic athletes

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Currently, the dietary counseling of Paralympic athletes is mostly based on nutritional guidelines for non-disabled athletes. Nutritionists are actively searching for knowledge and effective strategies to provide evidence-based dietary recommendations to this group.

Although there is very little research available in Paralympic athletes, it has been suggested that individuals with a disability may experience altered physiology related to relative energy deficiency in sports (RED-S) symptoms when compared with non-disabled athletes. A chronically low energy availability can lead to impaired bone health, which will be further magnified in Paralympic athletes who remain non-weight-bearing and wheelchair bound. By improving the quality of dietary intake as well as energy expenditure methodology, we may be able to more accurately estimate and monitor the energy availability of individual athletes. Big data from several Paralympic sports and countries are needed, including particular focus on energy availability as well as bone health and body composition, in order to develop Paralympic specific dietary guidelines for energy and macro nutrient intakes. Furthermore, more knowledge is needed to identify RED-S symptoms in Paralympic athletes and whether these reflect nutritional status or is a result of the disability itself.

Based on the findings of the ParaNut project, as well as other recent relevant work, possible nutrition strategies for Paralympic athletes will be discussed in this presentation. Relevant questions to be considered are:

1. What are the main focus points for nutritional counseling and dietary intakes in Paralympic athletes competing in various sports disciplines?
2. How can nutrition strategies structurally develop the para sport and facilitate improved health and performance?
3. What are the focus points for research interventions in Paralympic athletes?

**Topic:** Nutrition

**Presentation:** Invited

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