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CA-MRSA Rates Among Student Athletes Highest in Contact Sports

By Scott Baltic

May 10, 2018

**REUTERS**

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NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - The incidence of community-acquired methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (CA-MRSA) infection in high school and college athletes remains high, and those practicing contact sports lead the pack, according to a new study.

Though football and wrestling pose the greatest relative risks for contracting these drug-resistant infections, Dr. Tim Braun of Idaho State University told Reuters Health by email, "CA-MRSA infections are much more than simply a wrestling and football problem. For any athlete presenting with a potential bacterial skin lesion, the differential diagnosis must include CA-MRSA."

The study, online April 21 in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*, also found substantial variations in treatment and management protocols. For example, although the primary recommended treatment is incision and drainage, only about 20% to 30% of CA-MRSA lesions were treated with this procedure.

The study has two relatively novel aspects, said Dr. Braun, who worked on it with Dr. Leamor Khanov of Misericordia University in Dallas, Pennsylvania. First, it's one of few studies that have quantified the incidence of CA-MRSA within athletics prospectively; most quantitative studies have been retrospective and among less-specific populations.

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Second, he said, the wide variability in treatment that was found indicates the need for collaboration between professions "to ensure proper and prompt treatment and follow-up" of CA-MRSA cases.

"Our results may provide the largest snapshot to date of the CA-MRSA infection impact in high school and intercollegiate athletics," the authors write.

The two-part study consisted of two surveys sent to high school and intercollegiate athletic programs in the United States.

In the 2015-16 survey, 269 athletic trainers completed a one-time retrospective questionnaire, while for the 2016-17 survey, 217 trainers reported data bimonthly during the academic year.



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Of the 310 sport-specified, physician-confirmed CA-MRSA cases in the 2015-16 survey, most occurred in football (40%), followed by wrestling (32%), male basketball (5%), male soccer (4%), female soccer (4%), baseball (3%) and female basketball, female volleyball, softball, male lacrosse and "other" sports (all 2%).

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