

PRESS RELEASE

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For immediate release

AECC University College Professor involved in developing an international consensus statement on mental health in sport.

AECC University College Professor of Sport and Performance Psychology Stewart Cotterill has recently been involved in an international study on mental health awareness in sport which creates a new framework for applying practices and analysing the impact of mental wellbeing in sport.

The internationally recognised study, in the form of a consensus statement published in the BMJ Open Sport and Exercise Medicine, has created minimum guidelines for the use of mental health initiatives in sporting environments, with the aim of the study to increase the understanding of the links between sporting participation and improved mental health.

10 countries were involved in the development of this statement and it is expected that the work will help guide mental health intervention design for players, coaches, officials and sporting organisations, both in elite and non-elite fields.

The framework provides evidence-based guidance for selecting mental health awareness and implementation programmes in sport which acknowledge diversity and are quality assured at all stages.

Professor Cotterill reflected that:

“The importance of mental health in sport is gaining increasing recognition at all levels of sports performance and participation. However, research focused on mental health in sport has lagged behind other domains. This international consensus statement will provide guidance on the development of mental health awareness programmes in sport and to guide effective implementation across all levels of sport”

The statement creates a framework structure which includes; definitions and terminology which can be operationalised when promoting mental health awareness, key design principles such as; choice of psychological behaviour change theory, target populations, stakeholder involvement and delivery sites, outcomes to measure programme effectiveness; and methods for conducting and reporting interventions with sporting population groups (e.g. coaches, athletes and officials).

As part of the statement, six objectives were agreed:

- (1) to define mental health awareness and service implementation constructs for inclusion in programmes delivered in sporting environments;
- (2) to identify the need to develop and use valid measures that are developmentally appropriate for use in intervention studies with sporting populations, including measures of mental health that quantify symptom severity but also consider causal and mediating factors that go beyond pathology (ie, well-being and optimisation);
- (3) to provide guidance on the selection of appropriate models to inform intervention design, implementation and evaluation;
- (4) to determine minimal competencies of training for those involved in sport to support mental health, those experiencing mental illness and when to refer to mental health professionals;
- (5) to provide evidence-based guidance for selecting mental health awareness and implementation programmes in sport that acknowledge diversity and are quality assured; and
- (6) to identify the need for administrators, parents, officials, coaches, athletes and workers to establish important roles in the promotion of mental health in various sports settings.

Stewart is a Professor of Sport and Performance Psychology in the School of Psychology, Sport and Physical Activity at AECC University College, Bournemouth. The School delivers a range of sport, exercise and health science, and psychology courses; including both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in Sport and Exercise Psychology.

For media enquiries about AECC University College, or to request further images or interview opportunities, please contact Marketing, Communications Officer.

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AECC University College

Based in Bournemouth, AECC University College is a highly esteemed pioneer in health sciences, dedicated to excellence in education, clinical training and research.

The University College provides specialist study at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, with state-of-the-art facilities, high quality teaching and a regarded level of professionalism. With over 50% of students coming from outside of the UK, the single-campus is a thriving, supportive and inclusive community, constantly at the forefront of engaging with communities, collaborating with a number of partner organisations, businesses and other universities.

AECC University College's facilities include the on-site Chiropractic Clinic, School of Medical Ultrasound with specialist imaging services, and the Bournemouth Open Upright MRI facility. Alumni, research and collaborations span many countries and continents which gives emphasis to AECC University College's reputation as global leaders in their specialist areas. The University College has a history of innovation



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British Medical Journal

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