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Tackling cases of maltreatment in sport: The experiences and recommendations of sport psychology consultants

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Objectives: The present study focused on sport psychology consultants' (SPCs) experiences of working with cases of maltreatment. More specifically, given the "unique position" SPCs occupy as gatekeepers of athletes' safety and well-being (Kerr & Stirling, 2019), the present study explored their recommendations for practice in relation to maltreatment.

Methods: This study employed a qualitative, semi-structured interview design, guided by interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Five Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) registered SPCs provided their nuanced experiences and recommendations for working with cases of maltreatment in sport. The data were analyzed following published guidelines for IPA (Smith et al., 2017).

Results: Overall, the findings present a detailed account of SPCs' lived experiences of working within a challenging system and the ingrained nature of cases of maltreatment in sport. Consistent with this presentation's aims, SPCs in the present study also outlined various strategies to tackle the issue of maltreatment. These recommendations included a strong focus on prevention rather than being reactive to maltreatment cases. Other recommendations were also made at the organizational level concerning accountability and the need for representativeness of sporting boards.

Conclusions: From an applied perspective, the findings provide important recommendations for sporting organizations and SPCs around safeguarding individuals in sport. The findings also present key considerations for regulatory bodies such as AASP, FEPSAC, BASES, and the BPS about the continued need for education and training of both neophyte and experienced SPCs around maltreatment. Lastly, the findings reinforce the need for an ongoing consideration of the wider culture in sport.

Kerr, G., & Stirling, A. (2019). Where is safeguarding in sport psychology research and practice? *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 31(4), 367-384. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200.2018.1559255>

Smith, J., Spiers, J., Simpson, P., & Nicholls, A. (2017). The psychological challenges of living with an ileostomy: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Health Psychology*, 36, 14S 151.