

A comparison of performance on a 200m combined test with and without outer clothing

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Introduction

Most people learn to swim in quiet water, often a pool. Most people drown in open water, not always warm and not always quiet. The transition may be too great. We could, as our fathers and grandfathers did, swim more in open water. In several ways teaching in open water is even easier than in a pool, though it may not be possible in some climates much of the year. One of the elements we can approach more systematically is swimming with clothing. The aim of this study was to compare performance on a 200m combined test with long armed shirt and long trousers to only with swimming costume.

Methods

Sixty three (n=63) Grade 8 youth (14yrs old), swam the 200m combined test; a) roll into deep water, recover the surface and level off, b) swim 100m on the front, c) stop and rest three min, half on the back, half on the front, d) level off and swim 100m on the back, e) exit the pool over the side. Each element was awarded three points and results were recorded. A total score (max = 15) was compiled. This was performed by the subjects with only a swimming costume first and within 10 days, again with long armed shirt and trousers. The total score on both trials was compared using the Mann-Whitney U test for group mean differences to assess the degree to which these tests measure different qualities. The two trials were also correlated using the Spearman technique to determine to what degree success on the first trial could predict success on the second trial.

Results

This is a study in progress which will be finished in Sept/Oct 2010. From paired data points plotted from the first subjects tested, the group differences appear to be relatively great (showing that the one test measures different qualities than the other).

Discussion

Something is missing in our approach to teaching swimming when we see stable or increasing drowning incidence rather than reduced incidence. Many aquatic educators assume too much in terms of the protective quality of certain swimming elements, especially stroking. We unquestionably need to focus more on such general qualities as breath control and buoyancy control. However, most critical is the focus on specific survival techniques (of which there are many that are essential and appealing to children and youth). Swimming with clothing is one element which commonly receives too little focus. It is well known that in most societies the largest number of drownings occur in connection with involuntary submersion. This means the victim is clothed.

Conclusions

The results of this study suggest that swimming with clothing is sufficiently different from swimming only in a swimming costume to warrant specific and frequent attention.

References

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