

Swimming Ability, Perceived Competence and Perceived Risk among Young Adults

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Introduction

- Why do swimmers get into trouble?
- Do they over estimate their ability?
- Do they underestimate the risk?
- Both? *The deadly duo!!!*
- Are there gender differences?

KNOWLEDGE

- What knowledge is more important than that of your own ability?
- Accurate knowledge of your ability assists in judgement of risk and is influenced by attitude, all leading to behavior
- Why do swimmers drown? Because known swimmers are often non-swimmers

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Aims

- To assess the swimming ability of young adults
- To assess perceptions of swimming ability
- To assess perceptions of risk
- To compare real and perceived aquatic competency

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Methods

- Eighty one (81) university PE students participated
- They answered a questionnaire covering perception of ability, perception of whether these skills could be performed in open water and perception of risk
- They performed selected practical tests

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Methods: Practical Tests

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| ■ Distance swim | >2 lengths, >8, >16 |
| ■ Float in deep water | No, <2min, <4, etc >15 |
| ■ Swim on back 100m | 1- 4 pts on form |
| ■ Dive into deep | 1 - 4 pts on form |
| ■ Under water | >10,15,20 or 25m |
| ■ Surface dive to 4m | Fail & 1 - 4 pts, form |
| ■ Rescue tow, 25m w mannequin | Fail & 1 - 4 pts, form |

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Methods: Perceived Competence

- How do you rate your swimming ability?
- How many lengths can you swim?
- Can you stay afloat in deep water, no support?
- Can you swim 100m on your back?
- Can you dive into the deep end of the pool?
- Can you swim under water down the length?
- Can you surface dive to 4m?
- Can you rescue someone in deep water?
- How do you feel about these things in open water?

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Methods: Perceived Risk

- Capsize in canoe, well off shore
- Caught in rip current at unpatrolled beach
- Chased floatable into deep water
- Fell into deep river fully clothed
- Swept off isolated rocks while fishing

No risk, slight risk, high risk, extreme risk?

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Results: Gender Differences

- Significant gender differences: women out performed the men on all but under water swimming. 4 of 7 sign; Mann-Whitney U test
- The men perceived themselves to be average to good more often than the women
- There were no gender differences on perceived risk

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Results: Aquatic Competence

- Both men and women performed poorly on a) float, b) swim on back, c) surface dive, d) swim under water, and e) rescue tow.
- 43 % rated themselves good to excellent, but they were poor to moderate on 5 of 7 tests and 64% said they would have difficulty doing these skills in open water.
- While performing at poor to moderate levels, they reported low risk on 4 of the 5 risk scenarios

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Conclusions

- The subjects assessed themselves moderately well on 5 of 7 specific skills but were unable to relate that to their general competence
- They also perceived themselves as at low risk
- Poor real competence is of concern
- Their perception of what is a good swimmer is skewed
- Knowing ones limits is a key to water safety

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*Thank you for your
attention*



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