Special Olympic Participation Protects Adults with Developmental Disabilities from Diabetes

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Abstract

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Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) have a significantly higher prevalence of type II diabetes than the general population. Understanding which interventions will decrease the risk of developing diabetes in this population is essential to minimizing health disparities. This is one of the first studies to look at Special Olympic (SO) participation compared to non-participation in adults with IDD and diabetes outcomes. This large retrospective cohort analyzed 20 years of Ontario health and SO data. Results show that adults with IDD who participated in SO had almost a 15% less risk of developing diabetes compared to their peers who did not participate. This study provides evidence that SO participation decreases the risk of developing diabetes. Prevention strategies to decrease the prevalence of diabetes in adults with IDD requires a more targeted approach that SO participation can provide.