

## Book review

### **The Exercising Female: Science and Its Application**

Edited by Jacky Forsyth and Claire-Marie Roberts

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*The Exercising Female: Science and Its Application* is part of the Routledge Research in Sport and Exercise Science series. The contributors to this evidence-based reference book critically evaluate the science of female exercise, and consider all age groups, sporting disciplines and forms of performance. The editors have drawn on the research and clinical experience of scientists from all over the world.

Both editors share a passion for promoting research into women and exercise, and also chair the Women in Sport and Exercise Academic Network ([www.wisean.net](http://www.wisean.net)). Dr Jacky Forsyth is an associate professor, and a prominent researcher in the

field of women's exercise physiology and health. She has a particular interest in how ovarian hormones interact with exercise and bone health. Dr Claire-Marie Roberts is a senior lecturer in sport and exercise psychology. She is also an experienced clinician and researcher.

*The Exercising Female* addresses many under-researched topics, and highlights the gaps in the evidence base. The contents give the reader a broader understanding of why and how women's participation and performance in sports has been influenced by psychosocial and cultural dynamics, and many other factors. From training programmes to nutrition, injury prevention and rehabilitation, any past professional intervention was based on research that had been mainly conducted with male participants. In contrast, this book presents the latest research into the physiological, psychological, endocrinological, biomechanical and nutritional uniqueness of women, and the contributors discuss how these factors may influence female exercise performance.

The subjects covered range from the adolescent exercising female to the changes that the female body goes through during the perinatal period, motherhood and the menopause. Each chapter starts with a short historical overview before a critical evaluation of the latest evidence. Although the latter can sometimes be brief, these do outline the most important findings and confounding factors. Practical recommendations are included at the end of each chapter, and most interestingly, these are linked to real-world examples. This serves to make the evidence presented more robust, and the gender inequality in sports and research that is revealed is an eye-opener!

I was particularly impressed by the chapter on immunology, which examined the link between exercise, immune function and the risk of infection. Despite not dealing with different immune cells in my everyday job, I found that I was still able to understand the theory and the research presented. Furthermore, I am now keen to learn more about this area.

*The Exercising Female* also critically analyses the epidemiology and aetiology of the increased risk of injury in active females, and the chapter on breast health uncovers yet another potential barrier to exercise. The psychology of the exercising female is also comprehensively examined

in a section that discusses competitions, being a lesbian athlete, and experiencing the childbearing year and the menopause. I believe that all practitioners will find that familiarity with these aspects of the science is invaluable.

This book is a comprehensive and exceptionally well-written overview of the effects of the multifactorial changes that active women undergo throughout their lifetimes. It enhanced my powers of assessment and analytical skills, and also gave me some ideas for research. I only wish that I had had access to this book when I started my MSc studies a few years ago!

I would recommend *The Exercising Female* to all healthcare practitioners and coaches who treat and train female clients. It would also be an asset for those who are planning to embark on further studies in sports medicine or pelvic health. The only downside is the steep price of the book itself. However, it should be noted that an e-book version is available for £40.49, one-third of the price of the hardback.

**Biljana Kennaway**  
*Assistant Editor*