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The Effectiveness of Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment Therapy to Decrease Anxiety and Stress in College Athletes

Breana Hunt BSN, RN; Dr. Samantha Bauer DNP, BSN, RN; Kristen Martin LCSW

BACKGROUND

- Elite athletes experience up to 640 stressors a day that can negatively impact their mental health.
- The NCAA found that female athletes endorsed overwhelming anxiety and mental exhaustion two times more than male athletes in the 2022-2023 school year
- The NCAA also found that 14% of incoming 1st-year student-athletes have a mental health condition, and 45% of student-athletes develop a stress-related mental health illness during their career.
- MAC therapy has proven to be more effective in this population.

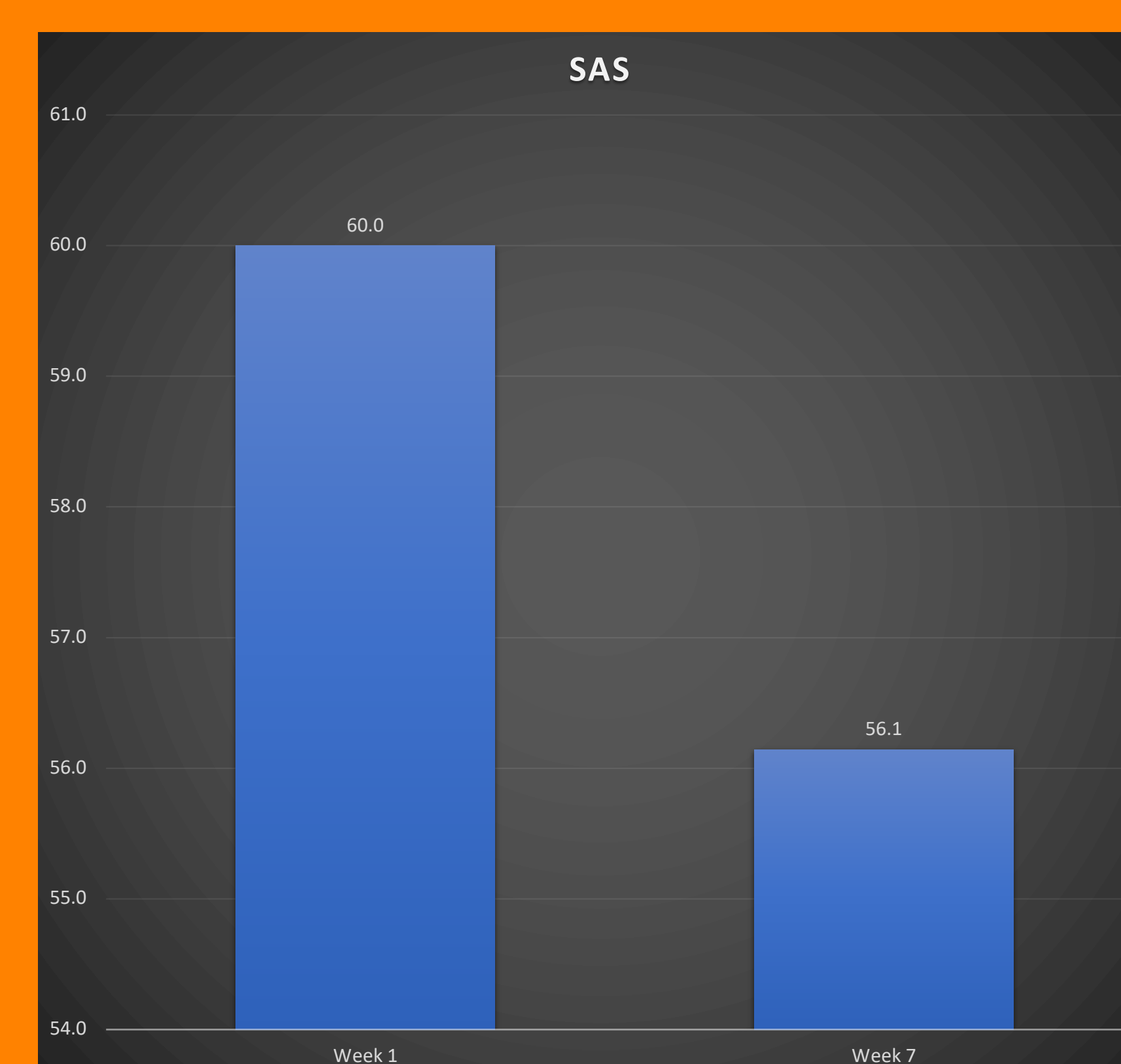
LOCAL PROBLEM

- The athletics and mental health and wellness departments offer access to nutritional education and assessments, psychiatric screenings, substance abuse counseling, and sports medicine treatment.
- There is no program like MAC therapy currently in practice for the athletes.
- The project aim is to assess the effectiveness of a 7-week MAC therapy intervention at decreasing anxiety and stress in collegiate athletes.

METHODS

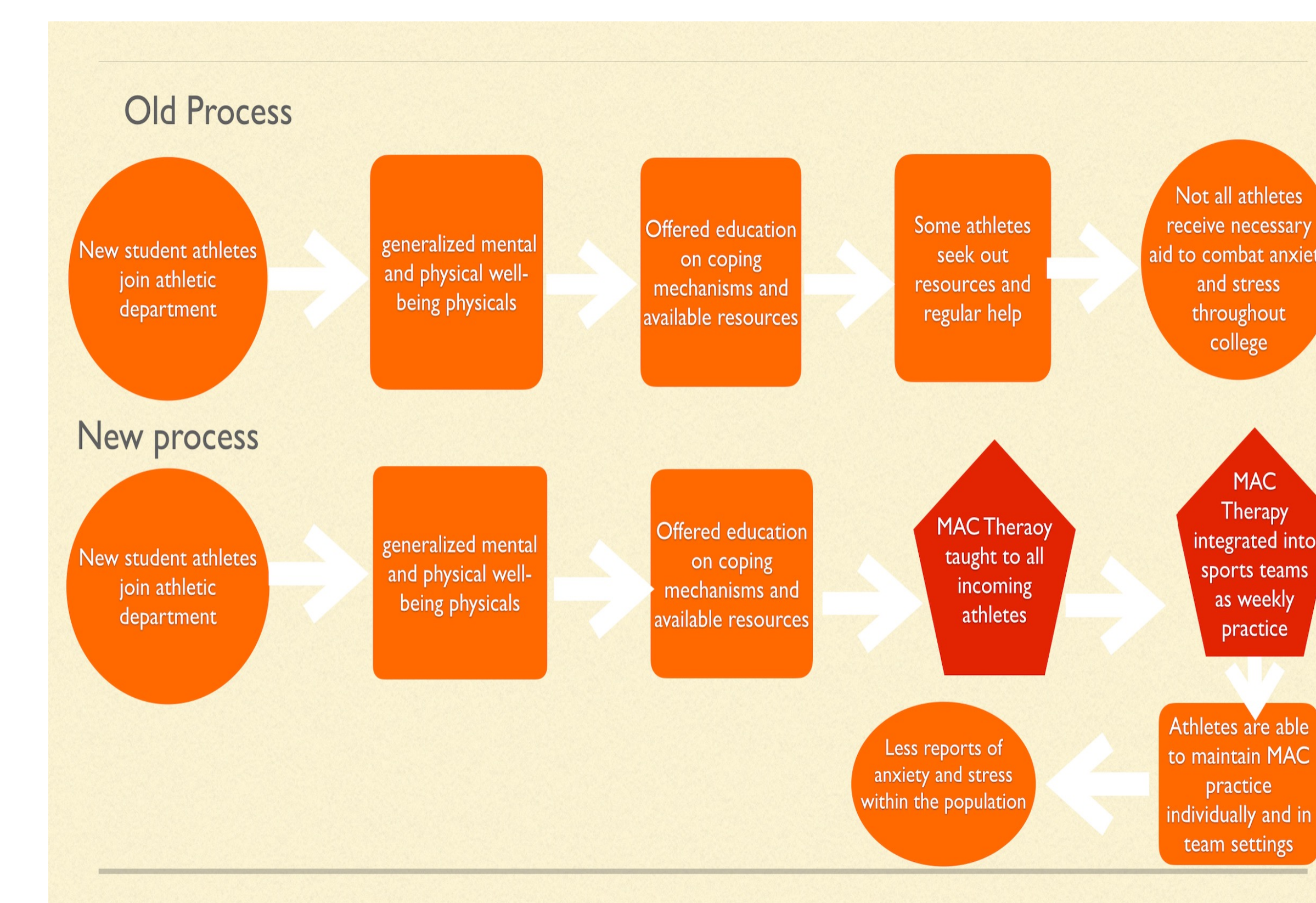
- The Model for Improvement (MFI) was the chosen framework for this project.
- Literature search and critical appraisal demonstrated consistent evidence for the implantation of MAC therapy.
- The project assessed outcome measures using the Sports Anxiety Scale-2 (SAS), Mindfulness Inventory for Sport (MIS), and Difficulty in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) at baseline, week 3, and week 7.

Athletes exhibited a **significant decrease** in sports anxiety and difficulty in emotional regulation after project implementation



INTERVENTIONS

- Athletes participated in one mindfulness group session and one individual mindfulness session each week



RESULTS

- Participants exhibited lower scores in the DERS score in week 7 (M=27.8, SD=19.1) compared to week 1 (M=44, SD=19).
- Participants also demonstrated improvement in SAS-2, with reported anxiety decreasing in week 7 (M=56, SD=10.4) compared to week 1 (M=60, SD=9.3).
- There was no significant change to the participants' MIS scores.

CONCLUSIONS

- MAC therapy proved effective in decreasing sports anxiety and increasing participants' emotional regulation abilities.
- Strengths of the project include simple implementation, cost, and the longevity of the skills gained
- For future projects, using the mental health and wellness staff may increase vulnerability and positive outcomes. Implementation based on sports may decrease scheduling conflicts and improve outcomes as well.