Menstrual cycle symptoms: monitoring and management

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Thank you for my invitation

Although I work with lots of amazing organisations, I have no conflicts of interest to declare

I will present the current state of the art without prejudice

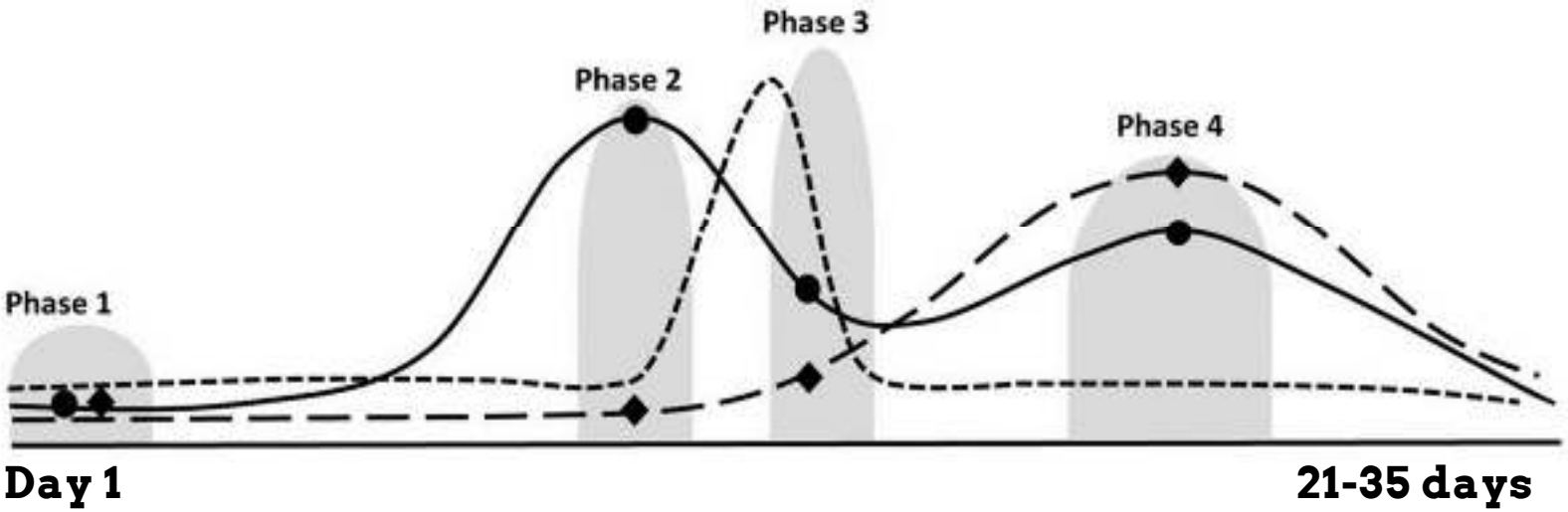
Institute of Sport, Manchester, UK

On a mission

to accelerate and amplify the development of women's sport

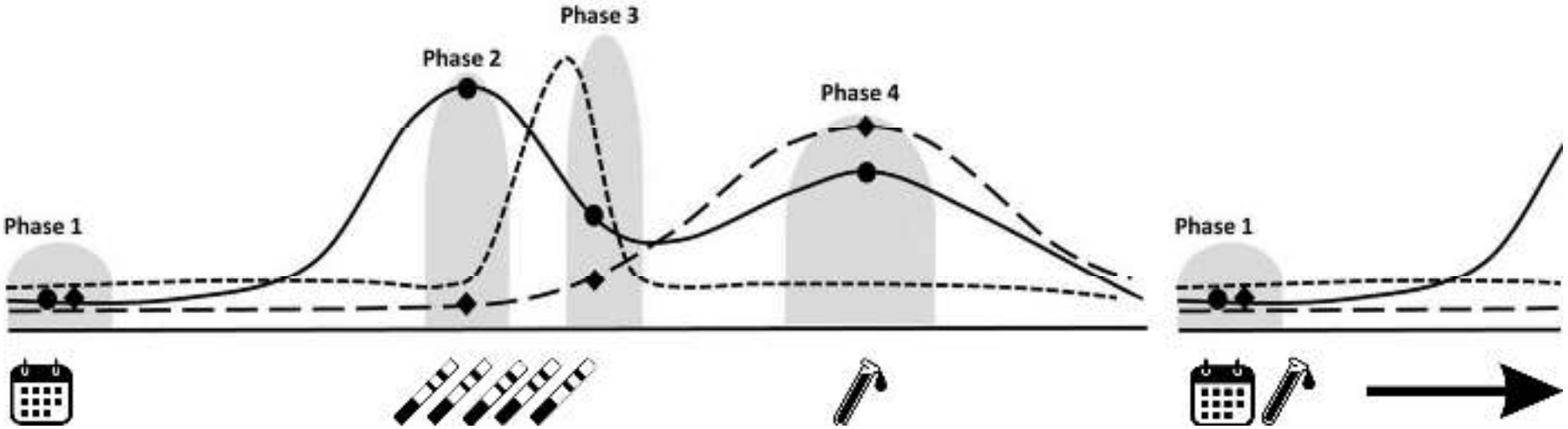
Menstrual cycle phases

based on hormones



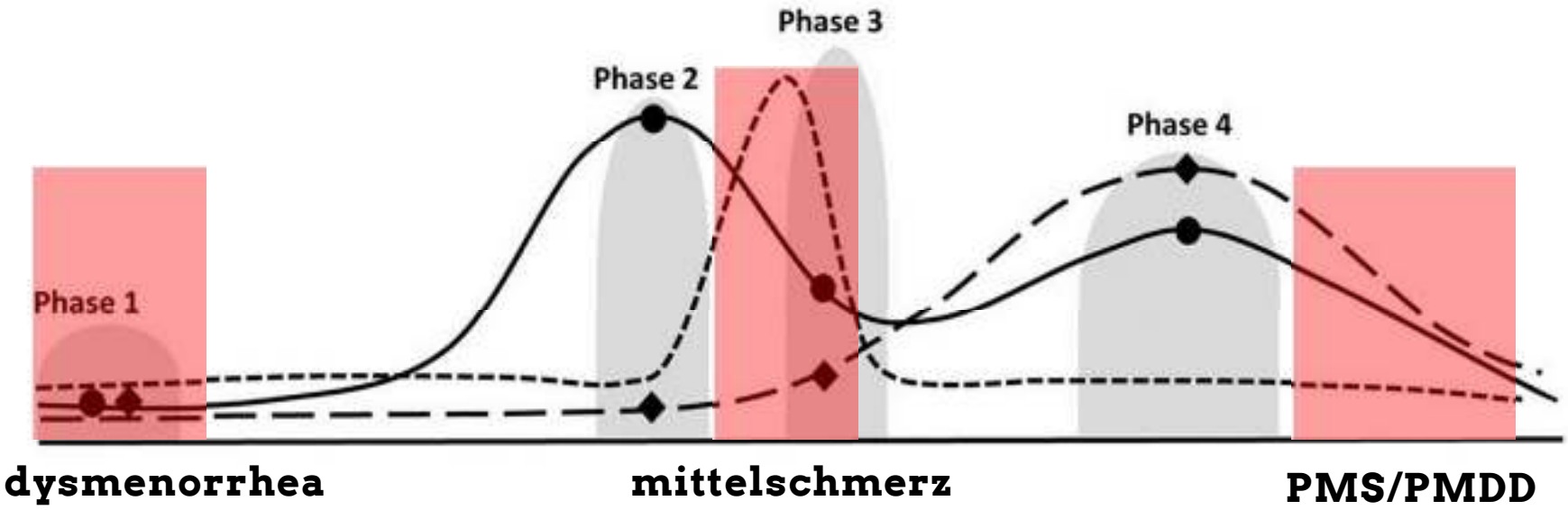
Menstrual cycle phases

gold-standard: all phases



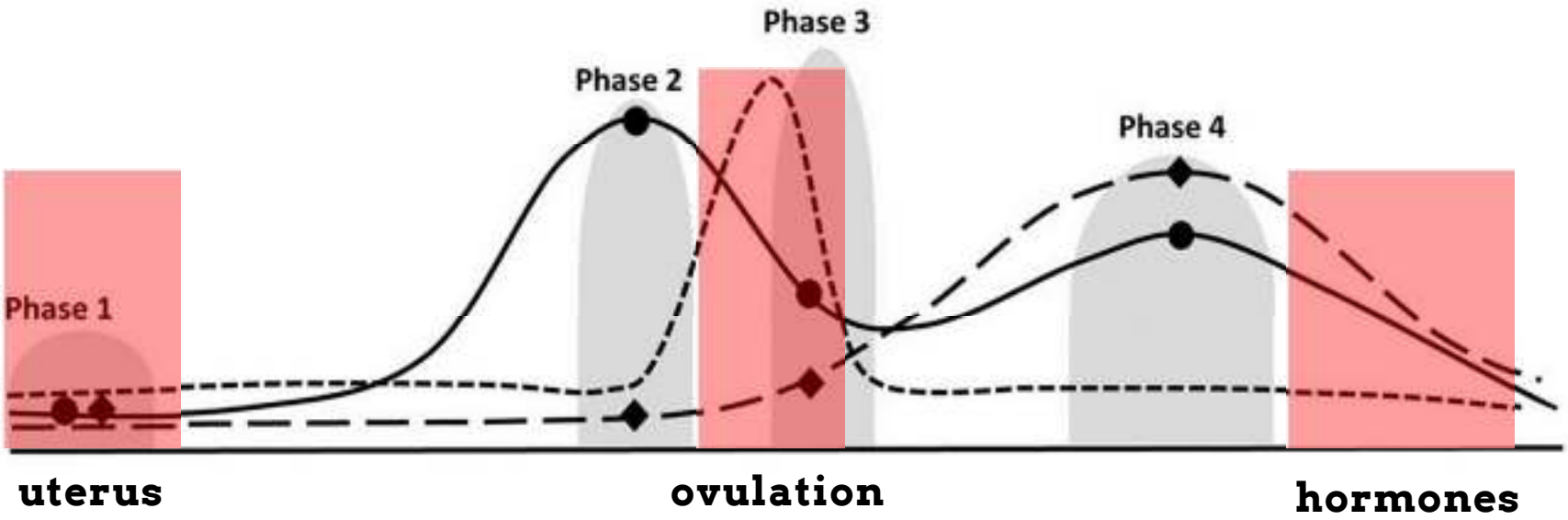
Menstrual cycle phases

timing of symptoms



Menstrual cycle phases

timing of symptoms



Menstrual cycle symptoms

monitoring

Menstrual cycle symptoms

self-reported

Menstrual cycle symptoms

Martin et al. (2018)

Symptom	Frequency	Prevalence, %
Physical		
Stomach cramps/Abdominal pain	103	47.5
Unspecified cramps	48	22.1
Back pain	37	17.1
Headache/migraine	21	9.7
Bloating	12	5.5
Nausea/sickness/vomiting	10	4.6
Tiredness/fatigue/lethargy	9	4.1
Dizzy/light-headed/lack of coordination	5	2.3
Leg discomfort	4	1.8
Unspecified pain	3	1.4
Hot flushes/sweating	2	0.9
Hunger/increased appetite	2	0.9
Sore breasts	2	0.9
Red skin	1	0.5
Constipation	1	0.5
Heavy bleeding	1	0.5
Muscle ache	1	0.5
Problems with exercise	1	0.5
Sore throat	1	0.5
Tight neck	1	0.5
Weakness	1	0.5
Emotional		
Mood changes/swings	9	4.1
Irritability	1	0.5
Frustrated	1	0.5

"Non-HC users had a menstrual cycle length of 29 (5) d and 77.4% reported negative side effects during their menstrual cycle, primarily during days 1–2 of menstruation (81.6%)."

Menstrual cycle symptoms

management

How the menstrual cycle and menstruation affect sporting performance: experiences and perceptions of elite female rugby players

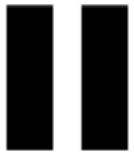
Menstrual cycle symptoms

Findlay et al. (2020)

93% self-reported menstrual cycle related symptoms

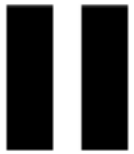
67% perceived their symptoms impaired their performance

66% self-medicated



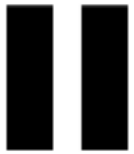
Menstrual cycle synonymous with symptoms

bleeding, perception, ill health, physiological pathway



Symptoms are self-reported and subjective

rather than objectively measured



Impact of symptoms on performance are perceived

and rarely tested

Symptom monitoring in elite environments

systems and processes

Real time capture

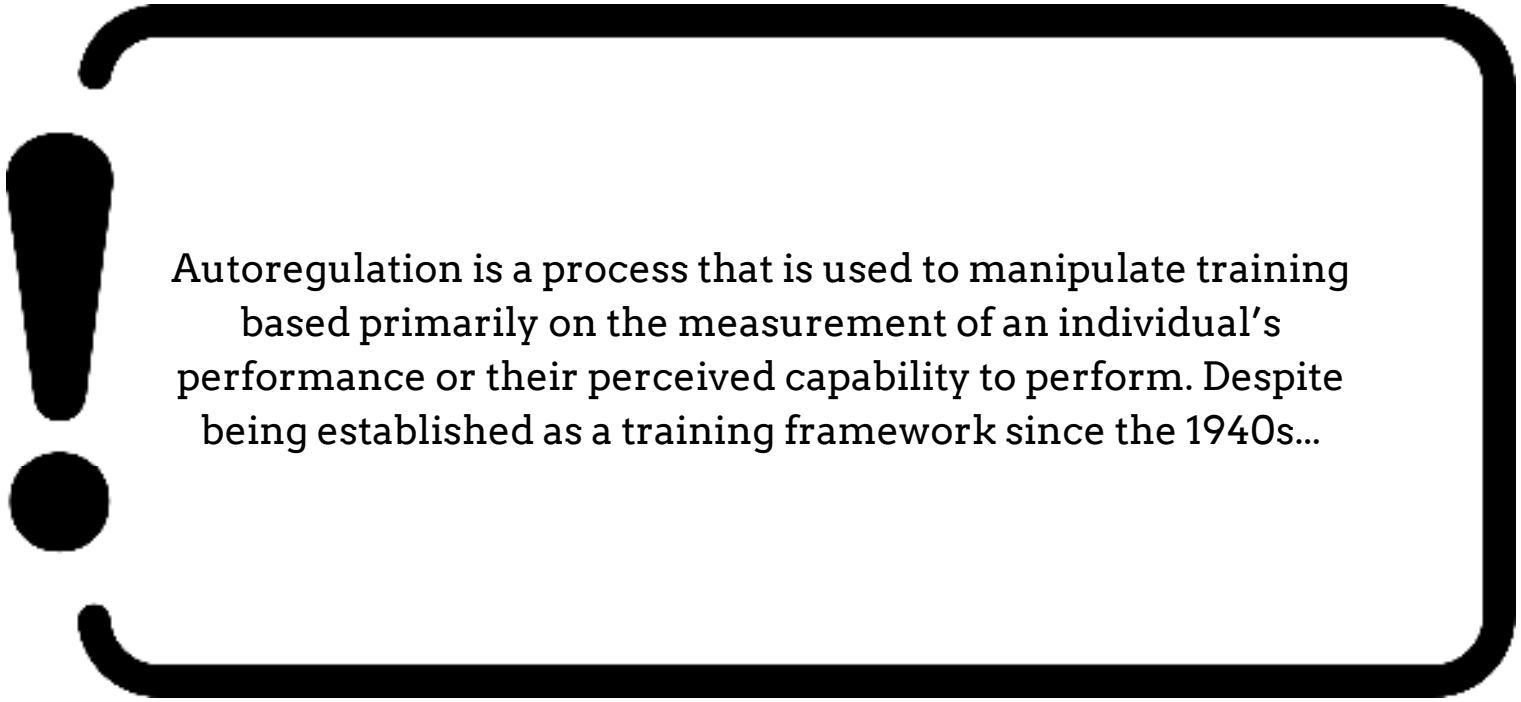
check for cyclicity

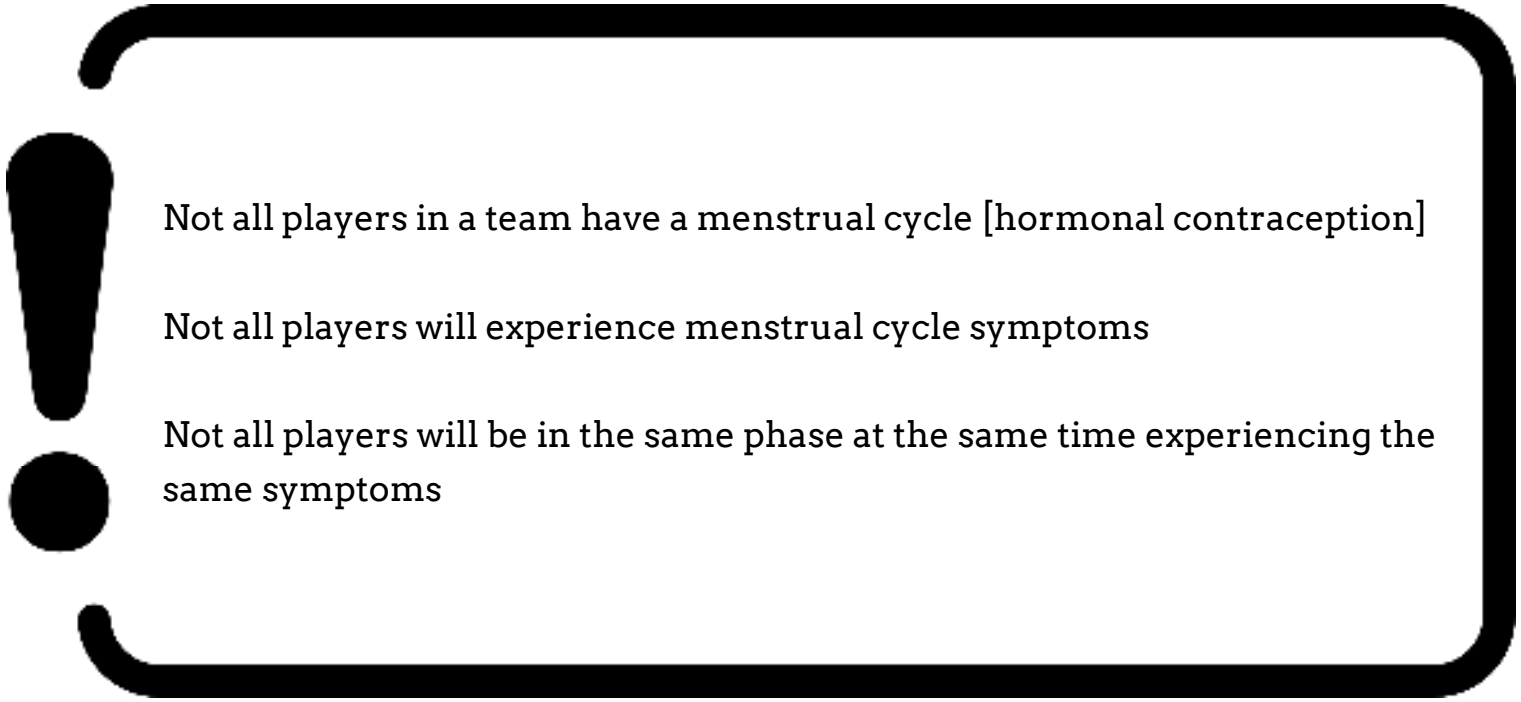
Symptom management in elite environments

systems and processes

YOU COULD: Adapt training based on phase

"train women as women"


Autoregulation is a process that is used to manipulate training based primarily on the measurement of an individual's performance or their perceived capability to perform. Despite being established as a training framework since the 1940s...



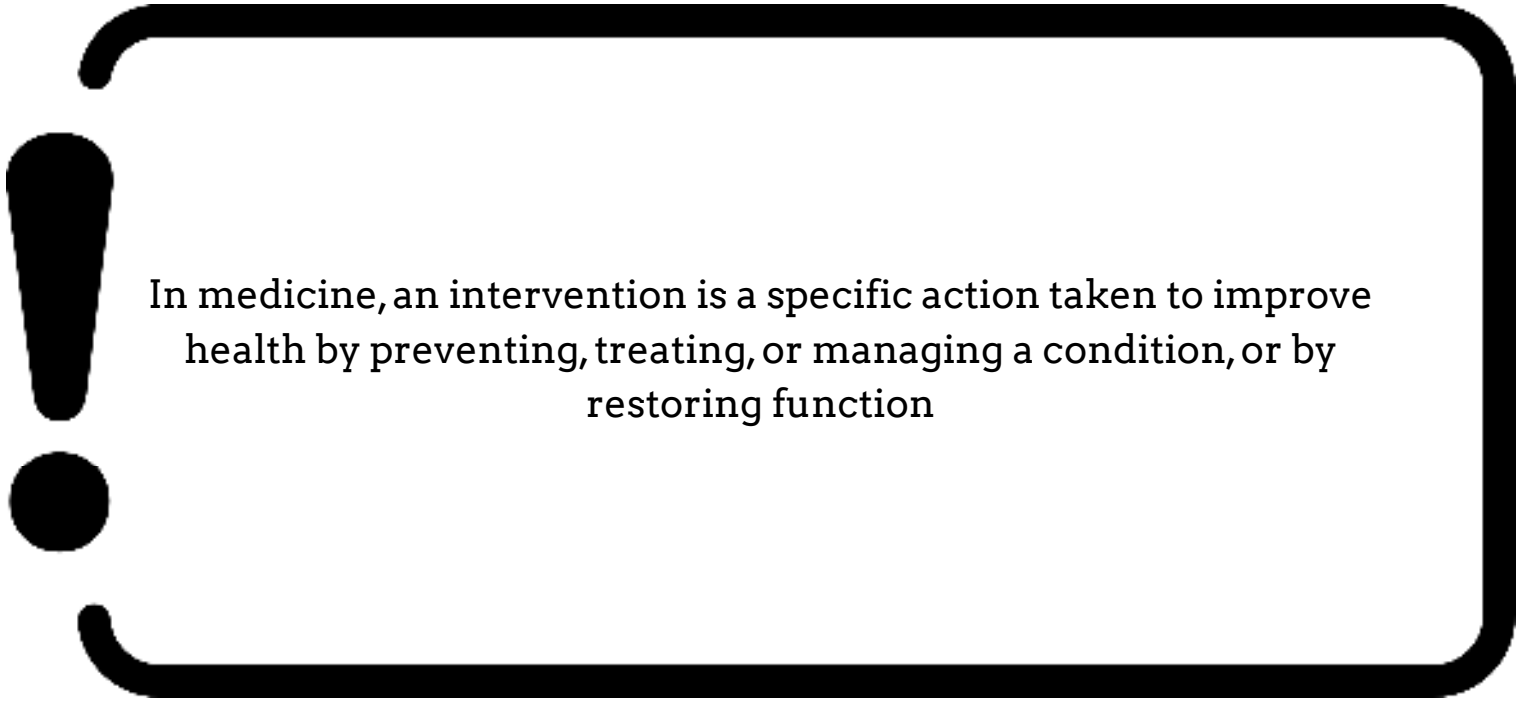
Not all players in a team have a menstrual cycle [hormonal contraception]

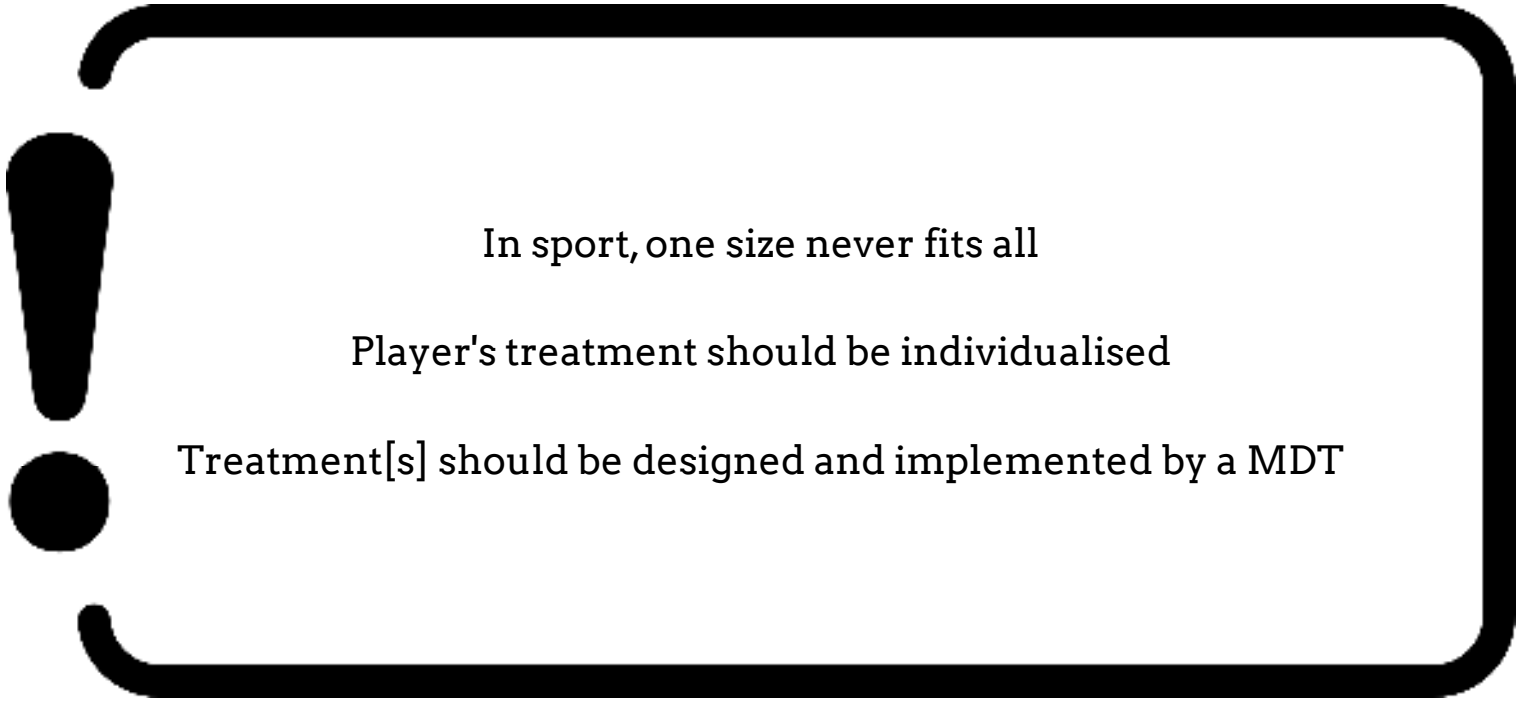
Not all players will experience menstrual cycle symptoms

Not all players will be in the same phase at the same time experiencing the same symptoms

BETTER YET: Optimise training in all phases

train players as players


In medicine, an intervention is a specific action taken to improve health by preventing, treating, or managing a condition, or by restoring function


In sport, one size never fits all
Player's treatment should be individualised
Treatment[s] should be designed and implemented by a MDT

DON’T FORGET: Perception shapes reality

the menstrual cycle is not just about adversity [symptoms]
we can reduce or remove symptoms
competitions have been won on every day of the cycle [even with symptoms]

Integration into the elite environment

opt-in, resources, pipeline

Menstrual health should be monitored using robust processes that include measurements rather than assumptions and should only be undertaken under the right conditions. Proactivity rather than reactivity is recommended when it comes to matters related to menstrual health.

Menstrual cycle symptoms should be monitored using real-time systems. Symptoms should be checked for cyclicity. Proactivity rather than reactivity is recommended when it comes to menstrual cycle symptom management. Treatment should be offered by a MDT.


Thank you