

INFORM Hub Annual Event

Sports and Exercise Recovery Support Breakout Session

Recap

Date: 24th June 2025

Venue: University of Reading, Whiteknights Campus

Discussion Facilitator: Dr Sam Abbott (Nottingham Trent University) & Dr Neil Williams (Nottingham Trent University)

The meeting commenced with introductions, emphasising participants' backgrounds and research interests in exercise, recovery, and dietary biotics. This set the stage for a comprehensive discussion on current research gaps and industry needs in sports nutrition.

Key Discussion Points

- **Research Needs in Female Athletes:** There is a significant industry and scientific interest in expanding research on female athletes, particularly in understanding how hormonal fluctuations, such as menstrual cycles and contraceptive use, influence performance and recovery. Current research emphasises the importance of not merely replicating male-based studies but focusing on unique challenges faced by females, including menstrual symptoms and gut microbiome variations. These insights could lead to tailored nutritional strategies and functional foods that enhance health and performance in female athletes, especially menopausal women, who represent a growing consumer segment.
- **Research Priorities for the Ageing Population:** Many athlete-focused nutritional strategies are applicable to the ageing population, with particular attention to functional foods that support immune function, bone density, and muscle health. Promoting healthy ageing and longevity is a key goal, with research needing to clearly define participant age ranges to address heterogeneity within the 65+ demographic. The increasing health

consciousness among individuals aged 50+ presents opportunities for targeted interventions to combat frailty, sarcopenia, and other age-related health issues.

- **Bridging Scientific Gaps and Industry Needs:** Addressing the numerous research gaps offers opportunities for collaboration between academia and industry. Market research plays a crucial role in aligning research priorities with consumer demands. Impact measurement, including patent applications and dissemination strategies, is vital for demonstrating the value of collaborative research. Researchers should consider multi-application potential and the adaptability of findings across different populations to maximise relevance and impact.
- **Enhancing Measurable Impact through INFORM:** To increase the tangible impact of research collaborations, it is essential to involve clinicians and healthcare professionals (HCPs). Strategies include organising HCP-focused events, translating research into clinical practice, and advocating for enhanced nutrition education among healthcare providers. Promoting inter-hub collaborations and sharing key research outcomes through guest speakers can further strengthen the network and facilitate broader implementation of research findings.