

นิพนธ์ต้นฉบับ (Original article)

สรีวิทยาการออกกำลังกายและกีฬา (Sports and Exercise Physiology)

SPORTS BRA MIGHT POSSIBLY AFFECT CARDIOVASCULAR FUNCTION IN ACTIVE WOMEN

Kanchana TAOTHONG*, Thyon CHENTANEZ, Metta PINTHONG, Suwadee CHAUNCHAIYAKUL**

and Rungchai CHAUNCHAIYAKUL

College of Sports Science and Technology, Mahidol University and Department of Anatomy,

Faculty of Medicine Srinakharinwirot University**, Thailand

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of sports bra on cardiovascular functions at rest, during and after exercise. Thirteen young habitual active females volunteered to complete 3 randomized running trials with different bra conditions of no bra (NB), casual bra (CB) and sports bra (SB) on a motor-drive treadmill at constant speed of 6.5 km/h, 0% grade up to 60, 70 and 80% of age-predicted maximal heart rate (MHR). Continuous cardiovascular variables, including heart rate (HR), stroke volume (SV), cardiac output (CO), cardiac index (CI), End-Diastolic Volume (EDV), ejection fraction (EF), Systemic Vascular Resistance (SVR), Blood Pressure (BP), Blood Perfusion (BPF), were collected at rest, during and after exercise. Results showed that all resting cardiac variables were not significantly different between groups. As exercise was started, all three conditions showed patterns of significant increasing in heart rates (HR), stroke volume (SV), cardiac output (CO) and cardiac index (CI) from its corresponding resting values ($p<0.05$). For within group comparisons, while SVR showed reduction at the beginning of exercise, EDV in SB and EF in NB and SB showed no significant differences from initial resting values. Between group comparisons during exercise showed no significant differences of most of the variables with the exception of differences of SV ($p<0.05$) and CO ($p<0.05$) between SB and CB at 60%MHR. No significant differences of other variables were detected at any intensity. During recovery period, there were immediate declined, compared between 80%MHR and 1st min, in HR in all groups ($p<0.05$), SV in CB ($p<0.05$), CO and CI in NB ($p<0.05$) and CB ($p<0.05$) (Figure1A, 1B, 1C and 1D). There was reduction in EDV in CB ($p<0.05$). During recovery period, when compared to resting values, SV and EDV in all groups had no significant difference; HR, CI and CO showed significant difference throughout 5 min period ($p<0.05$). When compared between resting values and 1st min of recovery, EF in all groups showed significant difference ($p<0.05$); SVR had significant increased in all groups ($p<0.05$); SBP in all groups showed significant difference only in NB group ($p<0.05$); DBP in NB and CB showed significant difference ($p<0.05$); blood perfusion outside strap in all groups showed no significant differences ($p<0.05$) and lastly blood perfusion inside strap in all groups showed significant differences only in CB ($p<0.05$). In conclusion, both central and peripheral cardiac functions including rate and contractility, systolic and diastolic blood pressures and total vascular resistance exhibit similarly as when subjects were in no bra or casual bra. Thus, it is recommended from this study that sports bra can be used safely with no cardiovascular limitations.

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KEYWORDS: sports bra, cardiovascular functions, exercise

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สรีวิทยาการออกกำลังกายและกีฬา (Sports and Exercise Physiology)

การใส่เสื้อชั้นในกีฬาอาจส่งผลต่อการทำงานของระบบไหลเวียนเลือดในผู้หญิงที่ออกกำลังกายสม่ำเสมอ

นางสาวกัญญา เต่าทอง*, วศ.ดร. ไถก้อน ชินธเนศ, อ.ดร. เมตตา ปินทอง, ผศ.ดร. สุวดี ขวนไชยภูล**

และ วศ.พ.ต.ดร. รุ่งชัย ขวนไชยภูล

วิทยาลัยวิทยาศาสตร์และเทคโนโลยีการกีฬา มหาวิทยาลัยมหิดล และ ภาควิชาการวิภาคศาสตร์

คณะแพทยศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ**, ประเทศไทย

บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาวิจัยครั้งนี้มีจุดประสงค์คือ เพื่อศึกษาผลของการสวมใส่เสื้อชั้นในกีฬาต่อการทำงานของระบบหัวใจและไหลเวียนเลือดทั้งในขณะพัก ขณะออกกำลังกาย และภายหลังการออกกำลังกาย อาสาสมัครเพศหญิงที่มีสุขภาพดีมีการออกกำลังกายเป็นประจำ จำนวน 13 คน เข้าร่วมการทดสอบอย่างสมัครใจ การสวมใส่เสื้อชั้นในแบบสุ่ม จำนวน 3 แบบได้แก่ เสื้อชั้นในที่สวมใส่เป็นประจำ (CB) เสื้อชั้นในกีฬา (SB) และไม่สวมใส่เสื้อชั้นใน (NB) การออกกำลังกายโดยการวิ่งบนลู่วิ่งที่ความเร็ว 6.5 กิโลเมตรต่อชั่วโมง ในแนวราบจนกระตุ้นอัตราการเต้นของหัวใจเพิ่มขึ้นถึง 60, 70 และ 80% ของอัตราการเต้นหัวใจสูงสุดตามเกณฑ์อายุ (MHR) เก็บข้อมูลขณะพัก, ที่ความหนัก 60, 70 และ 80% MHR รวมไปถึงทุกนาทีของระยะเวลาที่ส่วนสูงสุดตามเกณฑ์อายุ (HR) ปริมาณเลือดที่ปีบออกจากหัวใจในระยะเวลา 1 นาที (Cardiac output; CO), ปริมาณเลือดที่ปีบออกจากหัวใจในแต่ละครั้ง (Stroke volume; SV), ดัชนีการทำงานของหัวใจ (Cardiac index; CI), ปริมาณเลือดในหัวใจก่อนปีบตัว (End Diastolic Volume; EDV), สัดส่วนของปริมาณเลือดที่ถูกบีบออกจากหัวใจห้องล่างซ้ายในแต่ละครั้งกับปริมาณเลือดในหัวใจก่อนปีบตัว (Ejection fraction; EF), ความต้านทานของการไหลเวียนเลือดโดยรวม (Systemic Vascular Resistance; SVR), ความดันโลหิต (Blood Pressure; SBP, DBP) และการกำซับของเลือด (Blood Perfusion, BPF) ผลการศึกษาแสดงให้เห็นว่าตัวแปรทุกตัวนั้นไม่มีความแตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญระหว่างกลุ่มที่ขณะพัก เมื่อเริ่มออกกำลังกายเพิ่มขึ้นอย่างมีนัยสำคัญของ HR, SV, CO และ CI จากขณะพัก เมื่อเปรียบเทียบความแตกต่างภายในกลุ่มพบว่า SVR มีค่าลดลงเมื่อเริ่มออกกำลังกาย ส่วนค่า EDV ในกลุ่ม SB และค่า EF ในกลุ่ม NB และ SB แสดงให้เห็นว่า ไม่มีความแตกต่างอย่างมีนัยสำคัญจากขณะพัก ยกเว้นที่ CB ที่มีปริมาณเลือดที่ปีบในช่วงระหว่างออกกำลังกาย ได้แสดงถึงความไม่แตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญของตัวแปรส่วนใหญ่ ยกเว้นเฉพาะค่า SV และ CO ระหว่างกลุ่ม SB และ CB ที่ 60%MHR ที่พบว่ามีความแตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญ และไม่พบความแตกต่างอย่างมีนัยสำคัญของตัวแปรอื่นๆ ที่ทุกๆ ความหนัก ในช่วงที่ส่วนสูงสุดจากการออกกำลังกายทันทีพบว่า มีค่าลดลงทันทีใน HR ในทุกกลุ่ม, SV เฉพาะกลุ่ม CB, CO และ CI ในกลุ่ม NB และ CB ที่นาทีที่ 1 ของช่วงที่ส่วนสูงสุด เมื่อเทียบกับที่ 80%MHR ของ นอกจากนี้ยังมีการลดลงของค่า EDV ในกลุ่ม CB ซึ่งด้วย ในช่วงที่ส่วนสูงสุดทันทีเมื่อเปรียบเทียบกับขณะพักทันทีพบว่า ค่าของ SV และ EDV ในทุกๆ กลุ่ม ไม่พบความแตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญ ส่วนค่า HR, CO และ CI พบว่ามีความแตกต่างกันลดลงช่วงเวลา 5 นาทีของการฟื้นสภาพ เมื่อเปรียบเทียบค่าขณะพัก และนาทีที่ 1 ของการฟื้นสภาพ พบว่า ค่า EF ในทุกกลุ่ม มีความแตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญ ในขณะที่ SVR มีการเพิ่มขึ้นอย่างมีนัยสำคัญในทุกกลุ่ม ส่วน SBP มีความแตกต่างอย่างมี

นัยสำคัญเฉพาะในกลุ่ม NB และ DBP มีความแตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญในกลุ่ม NB และ CB นอกจากนี้ค่าการกำชับของเลือด (BPF) เมื่อวัดนอกสายเสื้อชั้นในพบว่า ไม่มีความแตกต่างกันในทุกๆ กลุ่ม และเมื่อวัดในสายเสื้อชั้นในพบว่ามีความแตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญในกลุ่ม CB เท่านั้น จากการศึกษาจึงสรุปได้ว่า การทำงานของระบบหัวใจทั้งในส่วนกล้ามและส่วนปลายประจุคงด้วย อัตราและความสามารถในการหดตัว, ความดันโลหิตขณะหัวใจบีบตัวและคลายตัว และค่าความดันทั่วทั่วไปรวมของการไหลเวียนเลือด แสดงผลคล้ายกันทั้งใน NB และ CB ดังนั้นจึงแนะนำให้สวมใส่เสื้อชั้นในกีฬาในระหว่างการออกกำลังกายซึ่งไม่จำกัดการทำงานของระบบหัวใจและไหลเวียนเลือด

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คำสำคัญ: เสื้อชั้นในกีฬา, การทำงานของระบบหัวใจและไหลเวียนเลือด, การออกกำลังกาย

INTRODUCTION

Numbers of female participated in exercise and sports have continuously grown (10). As female's breast is likely subject to be injured during excessive physical motions which caused by overstretched to soft tissues from pulling force (2). Therefore, sports bra is a selected choice to reduce risks of breast injury and discomfort feeling (4, 7, 12, 15, 17). Although sports bra has many benefits but about half of females participated in exercise ignore it. Previous study (McGhee *et al.*, 2010) found that only 13 % of adolescents wore sports bra. Other study (Bowles *et al.*, 2008) reported that 59 % of women did not use sports bras during exercise because they thought that sports bras can cause breast discomfort, furrow, breast pain, cardiorespiratory limitations (3).

Accordingly, sports bra is considered as a type of chest strap in which previous studies proposed the limitations of chest wall, cardiovascular and respiratory system (2,13,16). The present study, therefore, pay attention on effects of sports bra on the functions of the cardiovascular system compared with casual and no bras conditions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sixteen healthy females, age ranges between 18-30 yrs, from under graduated students of Mahidol University, voluntary participated in this study. After completes the informed consent form which was approved by the Ethical Committee of Mahidol University, they visited the laboratory for three occasions for exercise tests under randomized bra conditions of no bra (NB), casual bra (CB) and sports bra (SB). They attempted to perform 6.5 km/h motor-driven treadmill running exercise up to 80% of maximum heart rate starting with calisthenics warm up- static stretching for 2 min then 3 min of 2 mph treadmill walking. Haemodynamics responses at rest, during exercise and recovery were continuously measured using non-invasive technique (Physioflow[®]), blood perfusion using Laser doppler flowmeter, RPE scales, and discomfort scale prior to, during and 5 minutes of post-exercise recovery. Finally, all participants cool down after finishing all data collecting.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

All data were presented as mean \pm SEM. The *Kolmogorov-Smirnov test* (K-S test) was used for normal distribution testing. If all cardiovascular function parameters are normal distribution, One-way ANOVA was used for significant difference analysis, which was accepted at p-value less than 0.05. If a significant main effect achieve, Bonferroni's post hoc test was applied to identify the difference couple.

RESULTS

Characteristics of subjects

From Table 1, general characteristics; age (22.62 ± 2.10 years), weight, height (160.62 ± 5.49 cm), body mass index (BMI), percentage of body fat and percentage of muscle mass were not significantly different between three groups. Resting physiologic variables of these subjects were in normal ranges of Thai females at this age.

Table 1: Characteristics of subjects in control (no bra, NB), casual (CB) and sports bras (SB) trials. Values are mean \pm SD.

Variables	NB (n = 13)	CB (n = 13)	SB (n = 13)
General characteristics			
Weight (kg)	55.63 ± 5.68	55.73 ± 5.75	55.92 ± 5.28
BMI (kg.m^{-2})	21.55 ± 1.77	21.59 ± 1.81	21.67 ± 1.65
Body fat (%)	22.75 ± 2.75	22.53 ± 2.81	22.61 ± 2.50
Lean body mass (%)	28.02 ± 1.70	28.40 ± 1.78	28.28 ± 1.55
Waist circumference (cm)	73.54 ± 6.72	74.62 ± 7.34	73.65 ± 6.67
Hip circumference (cm)	93.77 ± 4.57	93.54 ± 5.18	93.42 ± 4.27
Physiologic variables			
Resting Heart Rate (bpm)	69.54 ± 6.86	71.15 ± 8.87	71.31 ± 10.71
Resting Systolic BP (mmHg)	104.23 ± 7.49	103.85 ± 12.19	106.62 ± 9.41
Resting Diastolic BP (mmHg)	62.85 ± 6.23	63.77 ± 6.04	66.15 ± 5.61
Local blood perfusion (arbitrary unit)			
Outside the strap	20.80 ± 3.42	16.19 ± 2.52	18.98 ± 1.83
Inside the strap	20.80 ± 3.42	20.69 ± 4.26	26.38 ± 6.42

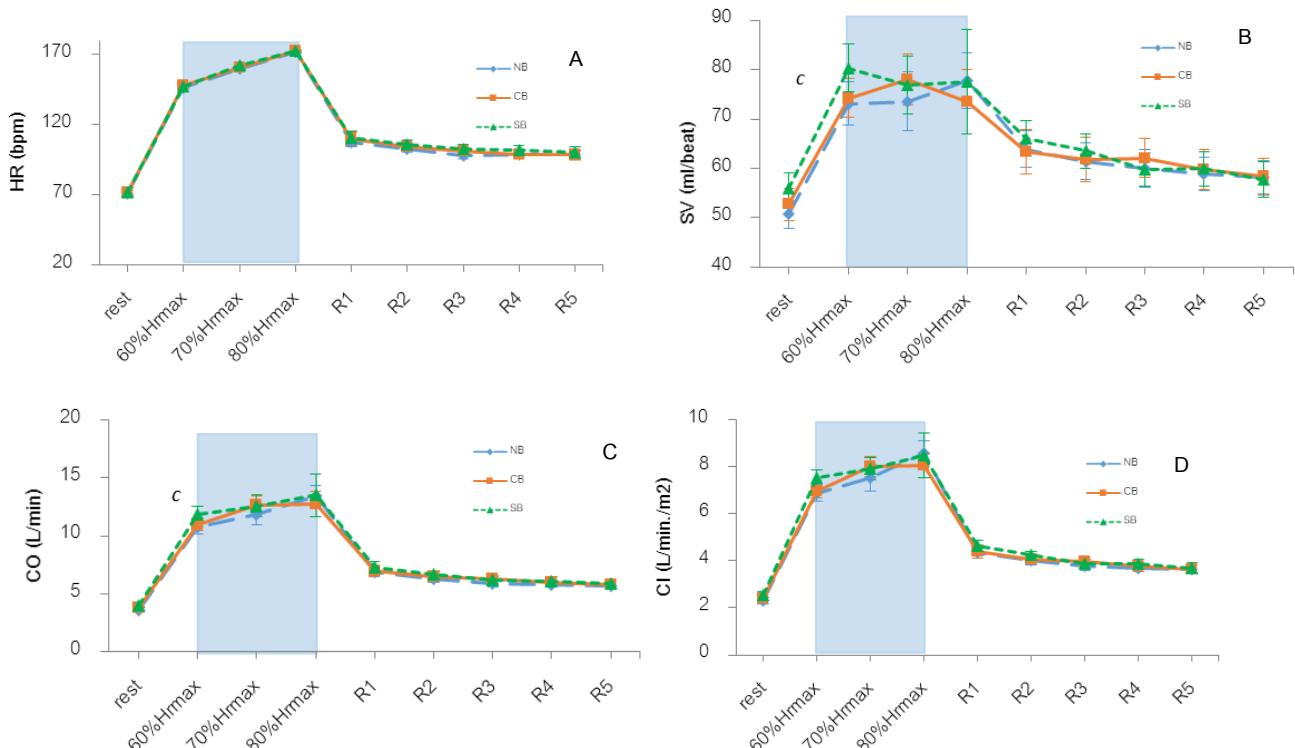
Cardiovascular Responses

Main cardiac variables including HR, SV, CO, SBP, DBP, CI, EDV, EF, and SVR were measured at rest, during 60%, 70% and 80% of age-predicted maximal heart rates (MHR) and every minute during 5 minutes of recovery.

All resting cardiac variables were not significantly different between groups. As exercise was started, all three conditions showed patterns of significant increasing in heart rates (HR), stroke volume (SV), cardiac output (CO) and cardiac index (CI) from its corresponding resting values ($p<0.05$). For within group comparisons, while systemic vascular resistance (SVR) showed reduction at the beginning of exercise, EDV in SB and EF in NB and SB showed no significant differences from initial resting values. Between group comparisons during exercise showed no significant differences of most of the variables with the exception of differences of SV ($p<0.05$) and CO ($p<0.05$) between SB and CB at 60%MHR. No significant differences of other variables were detected at any intensity.

During recovery period, there were immediate declined, compared between 80%MHR and 1st min, in HR in all groups ($p<0.05$), SV in CB ($p<0.05$), CO and CI in NB ($p<0.05$) and CB ($p<0.05$) (Figure 1A, 1B, 1C and 1D). There was reduction in EDV in CB ($p<0.05$). During recovery period, when compared to resting values, SV and EDV in all groups had no significant difference; HR, CI and CO showed significant difference throughout 5 min period ($p<0.05$).

When compared between resting values and 1st min of recovery, EF in all groups showed significant difference ($p<0.05$); SVR had significant increased in all groups ($p<0.05$); SBP in all groups showed significant difference only in NB group ($p<0.05$); DBP in NB and CB showed significant difference ($p<0.05$); blood perfusion outside strap in all groups showed no significant differences ($p<0.05$) and lastly blood perfusion inside strap in all groups showed significant differences only in CB (R1 and R2) ($p<0.05$)



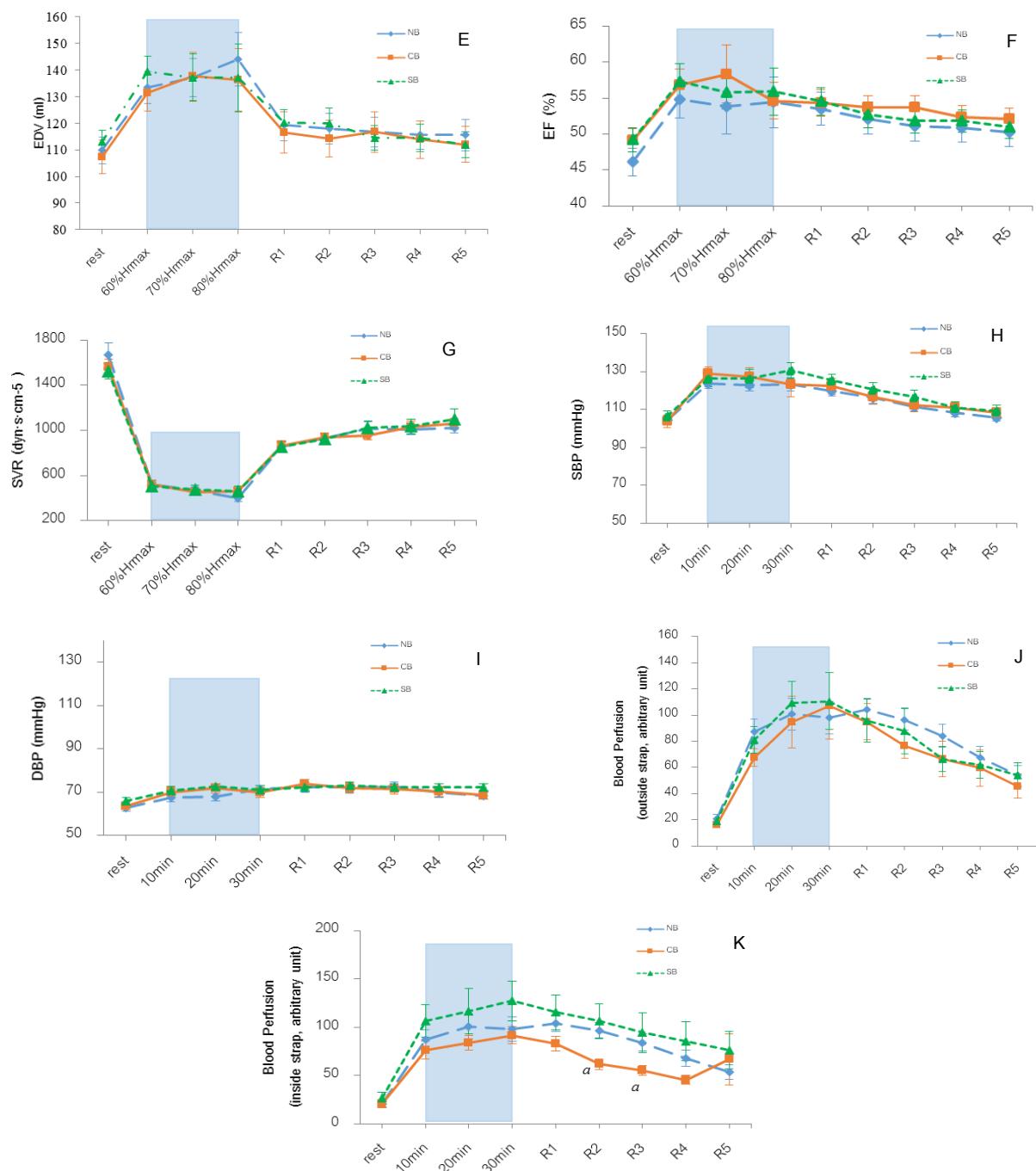


Figure 1: Between-groups comparisons of changes in heart rate (HR), stroke volume (SV), cardiac output (CO), cardiac index (CI), end-diastolic volume (EDV), ejection fraction (EF) and systemic vascular resistance (SVR) at rest, during exercise at 60%, 70% and 80% of age-predicted maximal heart rates (shaded area) and during 5 minutes of recovery period (R1, R2, R3, R4 and R5), and between-groups comparisons of changes in blood pressure (SBP and DBP) and blood perfusion (outside and inside strap of bra) at rest, during exercise at 10, 20 and 30 min and during 5 minutes of recovery period (R1, R2, R3, R4 and R5) in control (no bra, NB), casual (CB) and sports (SB) bra. Abbreviations: ^a represents significant between NB-CB, ^b significant between NB-SB and ^c significant between CB-SB. All values are compared at $p<0.05$

DISSCUSION

This study shows that changes of most of cardiac variables are in the normal and have similar patterns during exercise no matter any types of bra or even no bra were put on. It seems likely that the effects of exercise intensity override effects of bras. Thus, putting on sports bra does not exert any effects on cardiac functions. Previous evidence indicated increasing of ventricular contractility, which, in turn, resulting in increasing of stroke volume and cardiac output (10). However, this compensatory condition took place only when chest wall restriction is extremely high or totally covered, where vital capacity was diminished to 35% from elastic recoil of material used. In the present study, chest wall was not fully covered, but just partially (total area of sports bra is $0.15-0.16 \text{ m}^2$ (18), total area of thorax is 0.3 m^2 (8, 14). Investigators explored bra's shoulder strap compressive force and found that SB induces only 6 g/cm^2 when it was put on. Therefore, the free surface area left and low elastic recoil of bra's garment may not affect hemodynamic within the thorax. As a result, the increasing in SV and CO in SB at 60% age-predicted MHR in present study is most likely derived from higher respiratory rates (RR), even no significant difference was detected, RR in SB 37.98 ± 1.89 and in NB 35.07 ± 1.59 breaths/min. Respiratory pumps from breathing cycle is known to affect cardiac function in that the more frequent RR will bring about higher SV (Jordan, 2002). The higher SV in SB than NB conditions at 60% age-predicted MHR may be due to slight compression of sports bra on the thorax which follows by higher respiratory rate.

It is generally known that exercise intervention will bring about higher cardiac variables including higher heart rhythm and contractility. This is similar to the phenomenon occurred during sympathetic activation (1). As exercise is commenced, sympathetic neural activation becomes the first responses on cardiac function. This neural activity is closely related to change in blood pressure via baroreflex (8). The second responses derive from increasing in cellular oxygen requirement and later an increasing in metabolic waste products. These products from the periphery will affect centrally on the heart via both chemoreceptors and baroreceptors. As a result heart will pump more vigorously and frequently in order to supply adequate amount of blood to working muscles (9).

Cardiac index, the ratio between cardiac output and body surface area, is the hemodynamic parameter which relates cardiac performance to the size of an individual (5). Since body surface area is constant, thus increasing in CI is mainly due to increasing in CO. This means that cardiac compensation during exercise can offer suitable hemodynamic to all body parts. In addition, this study found that it is likely intensity-dependent.

Volume of blood being ejected or remained in the heart is another unique investigation of this study. EDV depends mainly on end-diastolic duration and venous return (9). This means the longer end-diastolic duration, the higher blood volume will be filled in heart chamber. Accordingly, heart rates during exercises for all intensities were not significantly different among the groups, thus these resulted in similar EDV during exercises at any intensities in all groups. EF is a ratio between SV and EDV, normally expressed

as percentage. In normal healthy population, EF ranges from 55 to 70%. At maximum exercise, EF may rise up to about 80% which is known to be an adaptation to physical workload. A higher EF would represent an increase in ventricular function in healthy individuals, whereas a decrease in EF would represent impairment of ventricular function and used as clinical indicator (9). Since EDV is likely limited from size of heart chamber, an increasing in EF, therefore, represents increasing in SV. It is generally known that sympathetic activation during exercise will stimulate cardiac contraction in parallel with faster cardiac rhythm. However, at sub-maximum exercise intensity, cardiac compensation with greater contraction will bring about higher SV with effective EF (9).

It is generally known that reduction in vascular resistance is due to exercise-induced vasodilation (9). Metabolic products in blood circulation and localized in the nearby region known as vasoactive agents will induce relaxation of vascular smooth muscles.

It is normally found in healthy individuals that SBP and DBP showed different characteristics to exercise intervention. Accordingly, SBP increases as a result of higher cardiac contraction which needs to pump appropriate amount of blood to supply even the periphery. Pulsatile pressure waves derived from cardiac contraction will distend vessels' lumen, this will, therefore, enhance energy stored within vessels' wall. DBP, on the other hands, is the stored pressure sustains within the vessels and will cause recoil of vessels (1). Increasing in SBP while DBP remains or slightly increases will physiologically set human vascular wall in a safety zone. It is because of these characteristics which keep mean arterial blood pressure (MABP) low. The present study indicated that MABP of runners will be kept in a safety zone with constant speed.

The result of this study showed that blood perfusion was not limited in both CB and SB conditions which may be explained that bra's shoulder strap does not induce excessive pressure on the shoulder, contrast with the previous study revealed that more pressure of sports bra helps to limit extreme breast motion during exercise when compared with fashion bra (2). Blood perfusion of either inside or outside the strap is the result of physical activity. This was found in all groups. Even though the amounts of perfusion are different, but no significances between groups were found. Thus we can, again, conclude that it derives mainly from the result of physical activity. While NB and SB perfusions remain similar throughout the recovery period, lowest blood perfusion inside the strap in CB group during recovery may possibly the result of tight chest straps found in the study. It was one of the benefits of this study to educate subjects how to determine correct bra size.

CONCLUSION

This study indicates that there was no limitation of sports bra on cardiovascular functions at rest, during and after exercise. Cardiac functions including rate and contractility exhibit found similarly as when subjects were in no bra or casual bra. Peripherally, systolic and diastolic blood pressures and total vascular resistance were not exhibited any changes from casual bra. Even there were fluctuations of some cardiac

variables as sports bra was put on, these changes were considered as minor. It is recommended from this study that sports bra can be used safely with no cardiovascular limitations.

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