

Doping: Knowledge and Attitudes of Athletes and Medical Students

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The purpose of this study was a) to assess the knowledge of athletes about the pharmacological substances used to enhance athletic performance, b) to evaluate their opinion about the doping control and c) to assess the attitude of both athletes and medical students about the ethical/unethical use of banned substances.

METHODS

A questionnaire was filled in by a) 144 track and field athletes (78 males, mean age $23.22 \pm 3.22y$ and 66 females, mean age $22.33 \pm 3.76y$), b) 131 rowing athletes (75 males, mean age $17.06 \pm 1.03y$ and 56 females, mean age $17.10 \pm 0.85y$) and c) 36 medical students (20 males, mean age $22.12 \pm 0.67y$ and 16 females, mean age $22.02 \pm 0.15y$).

Athletes were asked to self-report about the substances used to enhance athletic performance and to express their opinion about the validity of the doping control process. Medical students were asked about their own attitudes as future physicians coaches.

RESULTS

Both track and field (88,19%) and rowing (100%) athletes are aware of the most widely used illicit substances in competitive sports. In the first line are the anabolic steroids (rowing 96.18%-track and field 78.86%) and follow CNS stimulants such as Amphetamines, Ephedrine, Caffeine (rowing 12.21%-track and field 6.94%), hormones, diuretics etc.

Regarding the validity of the sample collection and doping control methods, 41.66% of track and field and 17.55% of rowing athletes think that they are good, 73.28% of rowing athletes «don't

Know», and a low percentage (8.33% track and field, 7.63% rowing) consider them invalid.

The majority of athletes (81.94% in track and field, 89.31% in rowing) and of medical students (83.33%) consider the use of illicit substances by athletes unethical, but 40.27% in track and field and 31.29% in rowing athletes would advise other athletes to use pharmaceuticals. Among the medical students, 97.22% refuse to advise other athletes to take illicit substances because they «know their adverse effects», 83.33% consider the medications with «no medical results on enhancing athletic performance» and 13.8% consider them useless.

Medical advise would ask for 22.33% in track and field and 13.74% in rowing, athletes. Among the athletes 51.39% in track and field and 27.48% in rowing think that illicit substances are «useful». The effect of these substances on human health is not known by 60.42% track and field and 59.54% rowing athletes.

CONCLUSIONS

Athletes know well the used illicit substances and consider valuable the doping control detection.

The ethical attitudes in doping is considered positive in both athletes and students, although the majority of athletes, as future coaches, would influence the decision of other athlete to use pharmacological substances, especially illicit.

The lack of knowledge about the adverse effects of illicit substances on human health among the athletes is important; this fact necessitates educational programs for athletes and especially for coaches and sport leaders who are the main factors that influence athletes to use drugs in order to enhance their performance.