

Exploring adolescent use of performance- enhancing substances

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Since the introduction of anabolic steroids, the main objective of using them has been widely abused. The use of these substances has steadily increased throughout the years. As popularity of anabolic steroids escalated, so has its demand. With the inception of anabolic steroids in the world of professional sports, the acceptance of doping amongst athletes was positive. During the 1970s, there were no repercussions for taking anabolic steroids, and so athletes, especially football players and weight-lifters, were trying to get that physical advantage over their competitors.

Many professional baseball and football players of this most recent generation have used anabolic steroids. In football there was the great Lawrence Taylor, Bill Romanowski, and Shawne Merriman. In baseball, a steroid scandal involved the great Barry Bonds, and numerous baseball prodigies who juiced up such as Mark McGwire, Jose Canseco, Alex Rodriguez, Roger Clemens, and Manny Ramirez. Not only have baseball and football players used anabolic steroids, but other types of athletes, such as power-lifters, as well. In track and field, Tim Montgomery was cited for doping.

In recent years, female track and field athletes such as Marion Jones were busted for using anabolic steroids. With the accessibility of anabolic steroids increasing at an alarming rate, a person has to wonder what kind of effect anabolic steroids could have on adolescents? If doping really is becoming accepted amongst professional athletes, what kind of influence will it have on the adolescents? This research analysis essay will be exploring the physical and mental risks and consequences for adolescents using anabolic steroids as well as their motivation for doping.

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Steroids were originally developed to administer to hypogonadism in the 1930s (Volkow 1). Through experimenting, scientists discovered that the use of anabolic steroids could generate muscle growth. This discovery led to the abuse of anabolic steroids in the sporting world. Technological experimentation and advances over time enabled researchers to identify many types of anabolic steroids. In researching the effects of anabolic steroids, scientists also detected many side effects from using anabolic steroids, although much is still unknown regarding their long-term side effects (Kusserow 9). There are two ways of taking anabolic steroids, one way is to take them orally or by injection. In taking anabolic steroids with these two methods, an adolescent can severely damage the endocrine system, musculoskeletal system, circulatory system, the hepatic system, and the skin (Volkow 5). A major health defect of taking anabolic steroids is that it affects the endocrine system. The endocrine system is a gland system that is responsible for the discharge of hormones that assist in regulating certain bodily processes, such as metabolism, growth, and development.

One of the important factors that the endocrine system controls is the mood of a person. The human body already secretes certain hormones into the body to keep bodily processes functioning the way they were supposed to. By taking anabolic steroids, an adolescent is disrupting the natural production of hormones (Volkow 4). The endocrine system only secretes a certain amount of hormones a day to prevent imbalance. If the endocrine system secretes too many hormones into the human body, there will be a hormonal imbalance which could lead to disease or abnormal development.

Taking anabolic steroids can cause reversible changes, which include sperm count deduction, infertility of sperm, and testicle shrinkage (Volkow 4). In males, irreversible changes may occur by taking anabolic steroids such as feminization and male-pattern baldness (Volkow 4). Although anabolic steroids may physically enhance a person's appearance, the damage caused by anabolic steroids is something many adolescents are overlooking. The human body normally releases testosterone and other hormones that causes growth, and stops the release of hormones as well.

However, taking anabolic steroids as an adolescent results in the synthetic release of hormones. This leads to a surplus of sex hormone levels that can prematurely signal the bones to stop growing (Volkow 4). Anabolic steroid use may cause more frequent tendon injuries due to " skeletal muscle adaptations taking place rather rapidly in comparison to connective tissue" (Hoffman 186). Also, anabolic steroid use causes severe acne based on research done by the Journal of SportsScienceand Medicine (Hoffman 184). Not only can steroids stunt your growth as an adolescent, it can cause severe damage to the circulatory and hepatic systems.

The circulatory system is responsible for the circulation of blood throughout the body. Other responsibilities include the removal of bodily wastes and the transference of nutrients to the cells. By taking anabolic steroids, an adolescent is increasing the risk of sustaining a heart attack, stroke, and cardiovascular disease (Volkow 4; Hoffman 184-185). According to Kusserow, physicians conducting a study/research involving former steroid users noticed " links, without consensus on degree, to cardiovascular disease" and anabolic steroids (Kusserow 12).

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The clotting of blood in the blood vessels keeps blood from flowing to the heart, which may cause heart damage. An adolescent can experience a stroke from having a blood flow disruption to the brain. Anabolic steroids elevate low-density lipoprotein (LDL) levels and decrease high-density lipoprotein (HDL) levels, which is the main factor in having a disruption to the body's blood flow (Hoffman 185). The hepatic system is the liver. The liver's main responsibility is detoxifying the human body. At this point in time, living without a liver is impossible.

So, if the liver were to have a blood flow disruption, the liver would fail, resulting in potential death. Using anabolic steroids may "increase risk of liver tumors and liver damage" (Hoffman 184). Internal bleeding may occur from the rupture of a liver tumor (Volkow 5). Two of the most alarming consequences of taking anabolic steroids are the change in behavior/mood and how it affects a person's mental status. Anabolic steroid use causes violent, aggressive behavior and irritability; approximately 60% of anabolic steroid users experience this change in behavior (Hoffman 187).

Tony Mandarich, once proclaimed to be the "greatest offensive lineman prospect ever," said that his steroid use caused his aggression to skyrocket on and off the field. "The Incredible Bulk" punched an Ohio State player for no reason before the football game even started and told him he "was going to die today" (Kozak). Anabolic steroid use also affected his thinking. Mandarich's past steroid use caused him to say things that he would never say were he not on steroids. "Some of the stuff I said, when I look back now, is just embarrassing," says Tony Mandarich (Kozak).

Although elevated aggressiveness may be beneficial for athletes, that is not the case with your ordinary citizen. With these behavioral changes, an anabolic steroid user is much more likely to fight with other people. This is especially dangerous due to the fact that the steroid user is most likely bigger in size and strength than their opponent. A person may experience a psychotic episode where the steroid user will be in a blind rage, thus disabling their ability to control their emotions. In this event, an adolescent on anabolic steroids could injure many of his peers at school, possibly even kill them.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), “ a recent study suggests that the mood and behavioral effects seen during anabolic-androgenic steroid abuse may result from secondary hormonal changes” (Volkow 4). This is especially true with Heidi Krieger. In females, masculinity may occur both physically and mentally with long-term use of anabolic steroids (Volkow 4). With Heidi Krieger, now known as Andreas Krieger, her long-term anabolic steroid use caused her to become masculine. Not only was she physically changing, the anabolic steroids caused her to believe that she was a man.

In an interview with former European women’s shot put champion, she was asked about her past anabolic steroid use and how it caused her to physically and mentally change genders. She said, “ I felt much more attracted to women and just felt like a man. But I knew I was not lesbian” (Cnn. com). One of the many questions researchers ask is “ why”? Many wonder what are the motivational factors in a person’s choice to use anabolic steroids. One of the main factors to this question would be <https://assignbuster.com/exploring-adolescent-use-of-performance-enhancing-substances/>

appearance (Kusserow 6). Throughout magazines are pictures displaying a person with rock-hard abs and bulging biceps.

On television, an adolescent may see a commercial of a man who is extremely big and strong. 57% of adolescents participating in a survey pointed to magazines and 7% pointed to entertainment as sources of influence (Kusserow 8). Nowadays, society's perception of the prototypical male is being big and strong. Due to popculture, male adolescents have this newfound belief that they must improve their appearance to match the appearance of the prototypical male (Kusserow 6). Also, in today's society peer approval is a must amongst most high school adolescents.

Teenagers see their friends getting "jacked" by using anabolic steroids so they try and imitate those actions since it looks easy. With the correct training regimen, adolescents may accomplish their goals in getting big with great success. According to Richard P. Kusserow, 89% of anabolic steroid users reported that they were satisfied with the results they were hoping for when they first started using anabolic steroids (Kusserow 7). Due to the successful use of anabolic steroids, 97% of users "agree that the physical effects encouraged them to continue using steroids (Kusserow 7).

For example, Tony Mandarich was influenced by his brother to use anabolic steroids so that he could increase size, strength, and athletic performance. His anabolic steroid use allowed him to be able to bench press 225 pounds an incredible 39 times while being able to maintain a 4.69 40-yard dash. That is a godly feat for a man that is 6 foot 6 and 315 pounds. When asked about his past anabolic steroid use, Mandarich said, "You're not supposed to

be as strong as I am. You're not supposed to be as fast as I am. You're not supposed to be as good as I am" (Kozak).

Apparently, without anabolic steroid use, Tony Mandarich would never have become the college football player that he was. Another motive adolescents have for using anabolic steroids is the pursuit for the improvement of athletic performance (Adolescent Steroid Abuse). Through the use of anabolic steroids, an adolescent can increase muscle mass, strength, and training capacity (Kusserow 7). According to Kusserow, many adolescents first use anabolic steroids at the age of 16 and that 85% of the users started by age 17 (Kusserow 5).

Much of this thought process has to do with famous role model athletes. "Users believe that many high-level athletes have used steroids, and 42 percent say this influenced them to start using" (Kusserow 8). An adolescent varsity football player trying to obtain a football scholarship from a prestigious NCAA Division I football powerhouse may see an NFL football player that they admire, and look up to, using anabolic steroids. The adolescent could potentially try and imitate the NFL player's actions due to this belief.

With football scholarships from prestigious Division I football colleges being limited and competition amongst football players across the United States being extensive, adolescents will do all that they can to achieve their goal. Additionally, adolescents may view the benefits in using anabolic steroids as more positive than negative. If using anabolic steroids can help these adolescents get to a great school such as the University of Southern California or the University of Texas, the side effects of using anabolic steroids could be something they are willing to risk.

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Another motive that could cause an adolescent in using anabolic steroids in improving athletic performance is the pressure they receive from adults, including their own parents (Kusserow 8). 55% of adolescent anabolic steroid users claim that their parents know about their use of anabolic steroids and that the parents do not care (Kusserow 7). " People may give a certain amount of slack to football players because there's this unspoken sense that in order to play the game well, you need an edge," says Todd Boyd (Klosterman).

If an adolescent can play well enough in sports to generate interest from college scouts, there is a good chance that the adolescent can get an athletic scholarship to help support their parents financially. Nowadays, college tuition is skyrocketing. It costs approximately \$22, 000 annually to attend the University of New Hampshire for an in-state student, and roughly \$12, 000 extra if you are out of state. With the recent economic downturn, many families do not have many financial options. Financial aid can only get you so far and the ability to take out a loan has become increasingly hard in this economy.

Assuming an 18 year old adolescent is out of state and going to be attending the University of New Hampshire for four years, the adolescent would be saving \$136, 000 if he were able to get a full-boat scholarship. This is not even taking into account the annual increase in tuition that occurs after every school year and money for miscellaneous things. Although an adolescent's parents may not be telling them directly to use anabolic steroids, the parents could be indirectly encouraging them to " juice up" by placing tons of pressure on their kids.

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Adults, whether it is the parents or the coaches, place immense pressure on their kids to compete and win, while conveying mixed messages of what are acceptable ways to achieve that goal (Kusserow 7). Adolescents may interpret those messages as, " It's okay to use steroids as long as you succeed and do not get caught" or, " Do what must be done to achieve your goal". If this is the universal belief amongst adolescents across the United States, how long will it be before adolescents begin to interpret other topics, such as violence or drug dealing, in the same manner.

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