

Performance enhancing drugs and the banned substances list



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Evaluate the suggestion that performance-enhancing drugs should be removed from the IOCs banned substances list

Performance-enhancing drugs refer to substances that are used to improve any form of activity: ranging from physical to psychological performance in humans. The use of these drugs have continued to evolve and has been facilitated by “ advances” in doping strategies despite improved drug testing detection methods and advances in scientific research. Athletes use these drugs to improve appearance and to enhance performance in sports (Wiefferink, 2014). The decision to use performance-enhancing drugs is underlain by a number of beliefs and values. Some of these include gaining muscular strength and improving performance. Others involve expectations about friends’ use of these drugs. Research also indicate that the use of these drugs is related to self-esteem, academic performance, use of other drugs, knowledge of other people who have used them, dissatisfaction with one’s own appearance and frequency of gym visits (Wiefferink, 2014).

It is important to note that, sportsmen are celebrities who are admired by many people. As such, every thing that they do is admired by many people. Thus, when they use drugs and eventually excell in their sporting life, they motivate most youths into doing the same. Without minding about the dangers of substance abuse, most youths have been influenced by sportmen into drug abuse.

Among notable athletes who have been poven to be using performance-enhancing drugs include Alex Rodriguez (A-Rod) who was given a 211 game suspension that lasted for the rest of 2013 season and the entire 2014

season for using performance enhancement drugs (Claudia & Shane, 2014). Such as a suspension should be a lesson to both upcoming and professional sportsmen of how performance enhancing drugs can kill ones profession. Moreover, these drugs kill the reputation of the individual as most people do not give credit to his performance but instead blame and give credit to the drugs that he used.

It is because of the facts above that many sports organizations such as international Olympic committee have come to ban the use of performance-enhancing drugs. They have put in place very strict consequences for people caught using them. To make this effective, the body has a list of banned substances (James, 2011). Interestingly, performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) are not restricted to illegal drugs or prescription medications, such as anabolic steroids. However, they include dietary supplements and a variety of compounds that are available at grocery and health food stores and online and are used to enhance performance among athletes.

Performance-enhancing drugs such as Anabolic Agents that includes Testosterone have a number of effects to the user. This drug is primarily used to treat delayed puberty, some types of impotence, and wasting of the body caused by HIV infection or other muscle-wasting diseases (Claudia & Shane, 2014). This drug has however been used by athletes to enhance their performance. The potential physiological and psychological side effects of anabolic steroid abuse are as follows:

First, this drugs leads to acne which refers to a long-term skin disease that occurs when hair follicles are clogged with dead skin cells and oil from the

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skin (Wiefferink, 2014). The drug can also lead to male pattern baldness and liver damage. Other physical effects include premature closure of the growth centers of long bones especially among the adolescents. This may result in stunted growth and disruption of puberty in children.

On the other hand, the psychological effects of using anabolic agents include increased aggressiveness and sexual appetite. This may at times result in abnormal sexual and criminal behavior (Jason, 2008). Withdrawal from anabolic steroid use can also lead to depression, and in some severe cases, suicide.

Another category of performance-enhancing drug is Peptide Hormones, Growth Factors, and other Related Substances. These compounds are primarily medically used to treat cancer. They are also used to aid growth in those born prematurely (Wiefferink, 2014). The presence of an abnormal concentration of a hormone, its metabolites, relevant ratios or markers in one's sample is deemed to contain a prohibited substance unless one can demonstrate the concentration was due to a physiological or pathological condition (Jason, 2008). The effects of these drugs are as follows:

The use of peptide hormones, growth factors and other related substances can result in hypertension, blood cancers/leukemia and anemia. It may also lead to strokes, heart attacks and pulmonary embolism. The drug can also lead to feminization which refers to the development in an organism of physical characteristics that are usually unique to the female of the species (Wiefferink, 2014). Other physical problems include thyroid problems.

On the other hand, human growth hormone when used as a performance-enhancing drug can lead to: Severe headaches, Loss of vision and acromegaly which refers to protruding or enlarged jaw, brow, skull, hands and feet. Other conditions include high blood pressure and heart failure (Claudia & Shane, 2014). It may also lead to diabetes and tumors. In some cases, this drug can lead to crippling arthritis.

There is also the Beta-2 agonist that is primarily medically used to treat conditions such as asthma and other respiratory ailments (Wiefferink, 2014). The physiological effects of this drug include palpitations, headaches and sweating. Other effects include nausea and muscle cramps. It may also lead to nervousness.

Diuretics are another category of performance enhancing drug. It is used in the treatment of conditions such as hypertension, kidney disease and congestive heart failure (James, 2011). However, when it is taken without medical supervision, it results in potassium depletion and possibly even death. The physiological effects of this drug include; dehydration, muscle cramps and dizziness which may lead to fainting. Other effects include drop in blood pressure and loss of coordination and balance.

In the list of IOC banned drugs also include stimulants. The primary medical use of stimulant is to treat conditions such as Attention Deficit Disorders (ADD/ADHD), asthma, narcolepsy, and obesity. However, the effects of this drug include; insomnia, anxiety and weight loss (Wiefferink, 2014).

Stimulants may also lead to dependence and addiction, dehydration, tremors

and increased heart rate and blood pressure. Other effects include increased risk of stroke, heart attack, and cardiac arrhythmia.

Narcotics have also been banned by IOC. When taken in small quantity, narcotics have medical uses that include relieving severe pain and inducing sleep. However, when they are taken in large quantity, it is a medical emergency and can lead to respiratory depression and even death. The effects of narcotics include: a false sense of invincibility, nausea and vomiting and increased pain threshold. The drug may also lead to failure to recognize injury and decreased heart rate (Jason, 2008). Other effects include physical and psychological dependence that leads to addiction.

The use of performance enhancing drugs also has a lot of negatives on an individual's social life. First, with regards to one's family life, there is the possibility that the rest of the family may feel embarrassed or ashamed at one's addiction to substance enhancing drugs. The family is always bothered about the fate of the victim (Claudia & Shane, 2014). This may lead to rejection, stigmatization and even sense of guilt. Those who use drugs may at times feel that their family has pushed them out.

Performance enhancing drugs may also significantly affect ones education. A child or a young person who is suffering from an addiction will have a lot of problem with his school life, relationships with other children and their home life (Claudia & Shane, 2014). This may lead to truancy.

Performance-enhancing drugs may also interfere with one's employment or professional life. Most people who use performance-enhancing drugs may not productive at work. As such, they may stop being punctual and efficient
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at work. Similarly, they may neglect their appearance and personal hygiene. They may also display erratic or unacceptable levels of behavior that may highly impact on the reputation of the organization that they are working (Wiefferink, 2014). Athletes on the other hand may boycott physical exercises and this may interfere with their performance. In some severe cases, drug addicts may start being absent for no good reason. They may also fail to complete their duties. In most instances when they are financially down, they may resort to stealing from not only the company but also their individuals so as to get money to purchase the drugs.

Performance-enhancing drugs may also affect an individual's health and wellbeing. Performance enhancing substances such as alcohol and caffeine which is fine on an occasional basis or in moderate amounts are normally harmful when consumed to the point when one becomes addicted (Jason, 2008). Cigarette smoking may heavily impact on the life of the user because it affects ones respiratory system.

Addiction to drugs affects the victim's personality and behavior in a variety of ways. However, this very much depends upon the type of substance used and the amount; their psychological makeup before the addiction and physical health and their lifestyle. Thus, some performance-enhancing substances have a greater effect than others upon mental health (James, 2011). For example, heroin is stronger than nicotine. It will therefore have a bigger impact upon the brain. It is also worth pointing out that, most people are different in regard to psychological makeup. This implies that people are affected differently by these drugs. Thus, one person may experience a

greater level of ' damage' than another person using the same substance. This is due to their brain chemistry.

Finally, the cost of performance-enhancing drug not only affects the sufferer but can also encompass family, friends and the society as a whole. Such costs include costs of policing, drug addiction help lines, support groups and rehab clinics. Indirectly there is lost revenue in the form of tax and national insurance contributions each time an addict either loses their job or is unable to work. This means a drop in revenue collection and an increase in welfare benefits, e. g. unemployment benefit.

In conclusion, performance-enhancing drugs have adverse effects on the lives of the users. As this paper observes, the effects of these drugs are not only felt by the user but by the immediate family members, friends, workmates and the society as a whole. Therefore, no substance-enhancing drug should be removed from the IOC's list of banned drugs. Instead, more research should be done on how to counter the use of these drugs. There is also need for sensitization among sportsmen on the dangers of these drugs.

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