

Co-creating anti-doping educational resources for athletes with intellectual impairments

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Tier: 2

There are over 6,000 athletes with intellectual impairments (II) registered with the international sport organisation for II (Virtus). Today, over 700 athletes with II are fully classified para-athletes in one of the three sports (i.e., athletics, swimming and table-tennis) represented at the Paralympics. Athletes with II are educated in line with WADA's International Standard for Education, which aims to help athletes develop clean sport behaviours and make more informed decisions about 11 anti-doping educational topics (e.g., strict liability, risks of supplement use, testing procedures). However, in our previous WADA funded project (Grant number: PLS2122-0084), we found that athletes with II do not have full comprehension about all anti-doping topics. That is, many reported that the education they received is overly complicated and they cannot fully process the information provided. As a result, athletes with II experience emotional distress during anti-doping practices (e.g., sample collection) and are at an increased risk of committing an anti-doping rule violation. A need therefore exists in creating anti-doping educational resources that are accessible for athletes with II.

The overarching aim of our proposal is to collaborate with athletes who have an II to co-create anti-doping educational resources that better serve their needs. Our proposal includes three phases over 30 months. In Phase 1 (months 1 to 6), we will establish National (NWG) and International (IWG) working groups of athletes with II to co-create a survey that is disseminated to athletes and asks them what the most pressing anti-doping educational topics require adaptation and how they prefer to be taught. In Phase 2 (months 7 to 12), we will disseminate the co-created survey to athletes with II to establish the anti-doping educational topics requiring adaptation and how these should be taught. In Phase 3 (months 13 to 30), we will co-create anti-doping educational resources on the topics identified in Phase 2 with NWG and IWG and disseminate these to international and national organisations.

In the International Standard for Education, Signatories to the WADA Code are encouraged to include "athletes in the planning and development of the Education plan to ensure activities are appropriate". Our proposal aligns with this standard and adopts an inclusive research design by co-creating anti-doping educational resources for athletes with II. Such an approach will ensure that outcomes of our project are effective, equitable and of benefit for athletes with II. This project will also ensure that this population will have the necessary tools to make more informed decisions about their anti-doping responsibilities. Our project will therefore empower athletes with II to help co-create knowledge that makes a meaningful change in anti-doping practice worldwide.