

Determinants of Intentions for Doping In Sports in Youth: Empirical Study and Prevention Intervention in Adolescent Athletes (DIDIS-Youth)

The use of performance-enhancing drugs (PED) in sports is a common doping practice, and understanding the reasons why athletes engage in this practice is of vital importance for the development of effective and evidence-based prevention interventions. In 2008, WADA funded project DIDIS, which resulted into the building of an integrated behavioral model of PED use and intentions in adult elite athletes. This model comprised several components from different theoretical perspectives, including distal (achievement goals, motivational regulations, moral beliefs) and proxy determinants of intentions and behavior (attitudes, normative beliefs, situational temptation), and identified important mediation paths between these variables. This knowledge can be transferred to the study of adolescent PED use, and accordingly provide the evidence base for preventive interventions aimed at young people. On that basis, the proposed study (DIDIS-Youth) aims to:

- a) Extend the behavioral model developed in the DIDIS Project to adolescent athletes involved in national and international competitions, and identify the predictors of PED use intentions.
- b) Use the findings to develop, implement, and evaluate an evidence-based anti-doping intervention targeting adolescent athletes.

DIDIS-Youth is significant because it extends previous empirical work into a population of interest for anti-doping strategies with a primary prevention character. The empirical work will shed light into the psychosocial factors that encourage PED use in youth, whereas the intervention will put this knowledge into practice and attempt to change maladaptive and pro-use beliefs and intentions. Overall, the proposed project responds to WADA's priorities by increasing knowledge of the risk and protective factors for doping in youth, empirically examining an integrated behavioral model of adolescent PED use, and evaluating an anti-doping intervention targeted to adolescent athletes. The project findings will be diffused to the academic community, sports and health professionals, and public stakeholders involved in the development of doping prevention and related education programs.