

## Project Allen

### Precipitating or prohibiting factor? Examining coaches' perspectives of their role in doping and anti-doping

**Purpose:** The purpose of this research is to examine coaches' attitudes, awareness, and perceptions of their role and actions in athletes' doping and anti-doping.

**Rationale:** Coaches are frequently identified as a potential precipitating factor in athlete doping (Backhouse, et al, 2007; Dimeo, et al, 2012; Kirby, et al, 2011; Lazuras, et al, 2010; Smith, et al, 2010). Smith and colleagues (2010) found that contextual factors, such as coaches, influenced athletes' attitudes to doping and anti-doping. Furthermore, preliminary findings from research conducted with Scottish elite athletes identified coaches as influential individuals with regard to athletes' knowledge and attitudes to doping (Dimeo et al., 2012). In addition to being viewed as a precipitating factor, coaches also continue to be identified as important agents in doping prevention (Backhouse et al, 2007; Cléret, 2011; Dubin, 1990; Kirby et al., 2011). Kirby and colleagues (2011) found that, for one of the athletes in their study who had admitted to doping, a coach had been a positive role model and acted as a deterrent for many years. However, when the athlete changed training groups and the positive influence of the coach was no longer present the athlete succumbed to the pressures to dope. In their 2007 review, Backhouse and colleagues identified only three studies that had examined coaches' attitudes to doping. Since 2007, little has changed with regard to our understanding of coaches' perspectives on their role in doping and anti-doping.

**Theoretical Approach:** Research demonstrates that coaches' perceptions of their coaching role guides their behaviours, the issues identified and acted on (Bennie & O'Connor, 2010; Gilbert & Trudel, 2001; 2004; Nash, et al, 2008). Furthermore, experts regularly reflect upon their beliefs about their role to monitor their professional practices (Schempp, et al, 2006). Schön's (1983) theory of reflection has been used to examine coaches' perceptions of their role and its relation to their actions (e.g., Gilbert & Trudel, 2001; 2004). According to Schön, the way practitioners frame their role determines the issues that are identified as 'problematic' and the strategies developed to address them. Therefore, coaches who do not view anti-doping as part of their role frame would be less likely to identify potential issues surrounding athlete doping. Consequently, they may unknowingly reinforce doping behaviour through their 'inaction'. In contrast, coaches who see anti-doping as important to their role may recognise issues/situations that may predispose or tempt athletes to engage in doping behaviour. As a result, and consistent with Schön's notion of reflective practice, these coaches may act to intervene and reduce the likelihood of athlete doping behaviour.

**Significance:** An examination of how coaches frame their roles in relation to doping and anti-doping will assist in understanding how coaches may act as precipitating or prohibiting social factors in athletes' doping behaviour. This research can also make an important contribution to coach education programmes by providing insight into coaches' attitudes, how they frame their role, the competencies needed to adopt an anti-doping role frame, and coaches' attempts to resolve dilemmas related to doping in their sport.