

A qualitative examination of knowledge of doping, and motivations and/or deterrents to dope, among American and Canadian elite female triathletes

Summary

The growth in the Olympic sport of triathlon has, not altogether unexpectedly, been accompanied by a rash of doping cases among elite competitors. However, the social science research on doping, and strategies to combat doping, has yet to examine the perceptions and experiences of the cohort of athletes that are not yet in the Olympic ranks. Further, few studies on doping across various Olympic sports have used in-depth qualitative interviews to investigate the nuances of athletes' knowledge of doping, and the factors that contribute to their refusal to dope, or their motivation to experiment in the doping culture. In addition, little research has specifically examined the ways that high-level female athletes negotiate the topic of doping, what they know about it, and where they learn about it. Therefore, the purpose of this project is to qualitatively investigate elite female triathletes' knowledge related to doping, as well as the motivating factors related to their refusal to dope or their willingness to partake in doping practices. The findings from this project will then be integrated with previous research on anti-doping education, and hopefully will contribute to a more coherent, directed, and relevant anti-doping education aimed at athletes who self-identify as future or current National and International-level competitors. Focus groups and follow-up individual interviews will be conducted with a sample of American and Canadian elite female triathletes during the beginning of their designated training camps. Data will be subjected to thematic analysis with the aid of Atlas-TI qualitative software, the results of which will be a collection of dominant general thematic categories related to athletes' knowledge of doping, and their individual ways of negotiating the culture of doping.