

## **Project COLLINS**

### **Why athletes say NO! to doping : exploring reasons across sport, age, ethnicity and experience**

Based on WADA's objectives, a research emphasis on why athletes use Performance Enhancing Drugs (PEDs) is a sensible focus. However, reflecting developments of drug research in other fields, it is equally worthwhile to understand why people do not use them. Of course, these motives are likely to be diverse and complex.

This project is designed to examine this complexity, focusing on why the majority of athletes decide against PEDs. We employ a biopsychosocial approach, considering physical factors (such as performance advantage or health risks), with psychological characteristics (e.g. risk taking behavior), and the athlete's social environment (for example, the advantages and rewards of PEDs, the opinions of fellow athletes and coaches, and the social opinions within the sport).

Given this complexity, and building on existing PED research, we anticipate that the propensity NOT to use will be determined by number of factors, including sport, experience, sex, ethnicity, etc. In the first instance, we will focus on athletes from a broad spectrum of contexts BUT delimit our examination to those from the United Kingdom. Ensuring this diversity will be a challenge, necessitating detailed examination using one-to-one interviews with a variety of athletes and coaches. We will follow the combined inductive-deductive methodology of adaptive theory. The inductive phase will allow us to listen to the voices of athletes in a grounded style. The deductive element means that we will be able to test the data from our interviews against the existing body of literature. Results will provide a rich and detailed picture of the factors which athletes consider in making decisions and deciding on their viewpoints.

Extrapolating from these data, we will develop a self-report questionnaire to test for factors used and weightings applied, and then use this with a large sample of British athletes. Incorporating more sports and a wider range of experience, will help us to present more generalizable conclusions ; a picture which can be more accurately considered as representative of the British sport scene. This final report, and the questionnaire used to generate it, will then be made available to other national setups, enabling them to extend and enrich the picture through consideration of their own athletes.

Clearly, this is an emotive and potentially threatening subject. To reduce threat and assist accurate responses, our investigative team is built around sport psychologists already working with the target sports. Given the established levels of confidentiality and relationships between psychologists and athletes, we hope that our results will avoid the challenges of self-presentation which has bedeviled much of the research in this area.