

Medical Doctors and Doping in Sport: Attitudes and Experience in Balkan Region - 8 Countries Study

In the history of drugs in sport athletes and the general public have often seen doctors as protagonists in doping. Firstly, some are engaged in "medically assisted doping", and, secondly, they supply athletes with doping agents, either deliberately or through carelessness. In study of Laure et al. up to 61% of athletes stated that they obtained anabolic steroids from a doctor. In the Netherlands study on 1000 general practitioners, 85% of the respondents admitted that they were not familiar with banned drugs or their side effects. Somerville et al. has showed that the team doctor was by far the most common source of information for the athletes (61%). There are also no published studies that assess the competence of team doctors with doping issues. Pilot study done by Anti-Doping Agency of Serbia and Sport Medicine Association of Serbia has showed that representatives (mainly medical doctors) of Sport Associations of Serbia didn't know answers on 33% and authorized Doping Control Officers on 22% on the basic questions about doping.

Considering these elements, the aim of this survey is to examine attitudes and experience of medical doctors from Balkan Countries with regard to doping and their contact with doping on an everyday basis. On the Olympic Games in Sydney 44% athletes from Balkan region were positive. On last Olympic Games 20% of positive cases have come from Balkan countries. If we add Hungarian athletes, who are geopolitically and mentally part of the Balkan Region, there were 40% of positive cases. Athletes from the Balkan countries have lost on last two Olympic Games 5 medals (4 in weightlifting and 1 in gymnastics) and 4 athletes has been positive on out of competition testing. Hypothesis is that athletes are not informed because of poor knowledge of medical doctors, specially the team doctors and others who are involved in sport medicine. It would be therefore essential that medical doctors, especially team doctors receive regular updates and be assessed on their knowledge of doping issues.

Project will be done through four phases. The first one will be initial screening of knowledge of medical doctors from the Balkan Sport Medicine Association during 14th Balkan Sports Medicine Congress in Bulgaria, September 2006. The 2nd phase will be organization of Master Workshop about key issues about doping in the region. In the same time interactive web portal will be introduced on Romanian, Bulgarian, Greek, Turkish, Albanian and Serbian language in order to increasing of anti-doping awareness through website and providing regular updated information. The 3rd phase will be national workshops with aim to educate wider population of medical doctors involved in sport, with target on team physicians from each country, since we believe that team doctor is key figure in process of anti-doping education.

The 4th phase will be workshop during 15th Balkan Sports Medicine Congress in order to present major conclusion from previous workshops and future directions of anti-doping fight on Balkan region.