

Project Jojic (Serbia)

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Promotion of safe use of sports supplements and anti-doping culture in adolescents via social media platforms

The dietary supplementation patterns in Serbian adolescents are unknown. Anecdotal evidence suggests that wrong perception of the effects of supplements, based on information from social media networks, leads to their incorrect usage. This could result in use of prohibited substance in later sportive career.

The main aim is to pilot an educational platform for adolescents on the safe use of supplements. Initially, the supplements usage patterns in adolescents, including athletes and non-athletes, will be discovered. The pattern will indicate what information should be shared via social media to ensure correct use of sports supplements.

This study is designed to assess the hypothesis that adolescent athletes use supplements for growth, development, and optimized athletic performance without appropriate knowledge on their effects and safety, potentially leading to indiscriminate use of prohibited doping substances. We presume that social networks, such as Instagram and TikTok have significant impact on young people's choices. If these channels provided proper guidance for supplements usage, the risk of doping and adverse effects on health would be lowered.

WP1: A non-experimental descriptive study, including qualitative and quantitative approaches, will be conducted using a questionnaire as a tool for data collection. Data on patterns of the supplement use and current trends will be collected over a period of three months, by distributing the questionnaire in high schools and local youth clubs engaged in competitive sports.

WP2: Development of short videos on the correct use of sports supplements and sharing them using online platforms relevant to the target population. Expectancy of a multi-modal educational pilot intervention is 8 months.

WP3: The effects of the pilot intervention will be evaluated using a follow-up questionnaire to acquire a feedback. Duration of the post – pilot research is 3 months.

A key positive outcome of this project is its potential to lead to paradigm shift in the education of the young on correct use of supplements and prepare them for future doping-free competitions. Social media as educational platforms will be used as tools for continual guidance, advice, and support to adolescents' community and promotion of healthy lifestyles and clean sport. Sharing of expertise via social network platforms can help rebuild assurance that virtual environment can be a source of accurate, valid and credible information with opportunity to promote adolescents' critical approach in evaluating available information.