

Project Mudrak

Doping in Czech adolescents: Prevalence, correlates and experiences

International research shows that abuse of performance enhancing substances (PES) represents a growing problem both in competitive and recreational sport. Doping undermines fair-play values of the competitive sport and also may cause various negative short-term and long-term health consequences in its users. Adolescents are one of the most vulnerable groups threatened by doping. In this age, young people are prone to social pressures emphasizing athletic achievement and physical appearance and tend to underestimate long term consequences of risk behavior which may lead to experiments with doping. At the same time, developing bodies of young people are especially vulnerable to side-effects of doping agents. Having up-to date knowledge of the prevalence of doping, and attitudes and risk factors related to PES abuse in adolescents is crucial for a success of anti-doping policies and preventive programs. However, the lack of research on this topic in the Czech context is striking. Available publications on the topic consist of popular manuals almost exclusively based on the common sense knowledge or results of international studies. So far, a comprehensive study focusing on doping in the Czech youth has not been conducted.

The main goal of the project is to bridge this gap and acquire comprehensive data related to using PES in Czech youth (aged between 14-18 years old, involved both in elite and leisure sport) which could be used in preparing anti-doping policies and anti-doping preventive programs. Specifically, the goals of this project are to explore 1) the prevalence of doping in this population, 2) their attitudes towards performance enhancing substances, 3) demographical characteristics of Czech adolescents using PES or showing positive/negative attitude towards PES, 4) the relation of their sport motivation and their using of PES and attitudes towards PES, 5) their detailed concrete experiences with doping.

Methodologically, the project is based on mixed methods research design. In the first phase, we will conduct a quantitative questionnaire study, in the second, qualitative phase, we will conduct in-depth interviews with selected individuals focused on detailed exploration of their attitudes towards and experiences with doping. We will approach the issue of doping in Czech adolescents from multiple perspectives capturing general trends as well as obtaining detailed insight into motivational and social processes influencing the adolescents' decision to use/refuse PES. The main outcomes of the project will be 1) scientific, aimed at academic audience and usable in preparing evidence-based anti-doping policies, and 2) practical, aimed at teachers and coaches working with sporting youth.

The results will be published in Czech and international peer-reviewed journals and in popular magazines for teachers and coaches. Results will be also presented at Czech and international conferences and will be included in seminars for future PE teachers and coaches. In the second year of the project, the results will be summarized in a monograph for academics and a practical manual for teachers and coaches. All results will be published at web pages of the Czech Antidoping Committee.