

Performance-enhancing drug-use among amateur sportsmen and women in Cameroon: A study of knowledge, attitudes and practices

The use of drugs associated to sporting events in Cameroon is a very common phenomenon. In some studies drug use rates of as high as 19% has been reported. Even more common is drug-use among amateur sportsmen and women. In one study, 8% of amateur footballers admitted taking cocaine before and after matches. From the evidence provided by isolated studies, it seems that amateur sportsmen and women in Cameroon most of whom are still very young have only distorted knowledge and perceptions of risks linked to the use of performance-enhancing drugs and hence, are ready to use them each time they have the opportunity to do so. Despite this bleak picture, very little if anything at all, is being done to educate, create awareness and sensitise young sportsmen and women in the country about the negative health effects and criminal consequences of indulging in drug use. Working with amateur (mostly the youth) sportsmen and women has the theoretical advantage of influencing perceptions, beliefs and behaviors early in the sport career of this group before they are established as adult patterns. Influencing amateur athletes in their formative years is a potential mechanism for influencing an emerging culture of fair competition, equity and healthy development within the athletic community and consequently, serve as a gateway to the larger community where drug-use among the young people is a fast growing phenomenon.

This present study is seeking to investigate awareness and use of lawful and unlawful substances by young athletes in as a means of enhancing their performance and gaining a competitive edge over the other competitors, to identify sources of knowledge available to young athletes about lawful and unlawful substances, to study doping behaviour among young athletes including voluntary and involuntary doping, to study the determinants of doping behaviour in view of influencing those determinants, to identify circuits of acquisition of drugs available to young athletes and to study national anti-doping policies, measures, achievements and weaknesses.