

Project Winand (Luxembourg, UK, Canada)

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Understanding and nurturing the role of young athletes' parents in doping prevention

The World Anti-Doping Agency aims to promote anti-doping policies and best practices through National Anti-Doping Organisations (NADOs) with the goal to develop doping-free sport. A key part of this strategy is to promote anti-doping education programmes which are delivered at national and local level by NADOs and regional/national sport federations in order to inform athletes of anti-doping rules, processes, sanctions and risks related to doping. These programmes are particularly important for athletes at a young age, when they are under the responsibility of their parents as they influence how young athletes view their participation in performance sport, with integrity, increase their knowledge and reinforce positive values that shape decision making and their attitude against cheating (WADA, 2013). WADA (2015) has recognised the importance of athlete support personnel, including parents, in promoting anti-doping behaviour. Parental support is indeed a key factor influencing the development of elite athletes (Baker et al., 2003; Wylleman et al., 2007), including their attitudes towards high risk behaviour (Harris et al., 2013; Mercken et al., 2013). Parents support their child athlete to live, train and perform in the challenging high performance world. Even though high pressure exerted by parents on their child athlete can lead to doping temptation (Laure & Binsinger, 2005; Madigan, et al., 2016), parents can support their children with a clean approach. Parents can help shaping clean sport values and disseminating clean sport messages at an age when young athletes are the most vulnerable to the potentially negative influence of others (Erickson et al., 2017; Lentillon-Kaestner & Carstairs, 2010) and avoiding the pitfalls that might tempt athletes to doping. They have an advisory and supportive role, and communicate influential values during the development of their child into a competitive athlete (Bloom, 1985; Coté, 1999). This development stage particularly occurs between 12 to 17 years of age, when young athletes are recognised as being talented, and as a consequence endure intensive level of training and competition (Wylleman et al., 2013), associated with high pressure to perform (Sato et al., 2012). This pressure may lead to increased temptations to use prohibited substances (Pappa & Kennedy, 2012; Weber, 2009), even more so when support personnel is deficient, uninformed or complicit. Hence, parents have a crucial role to play to prevent this behaviour.

However no research has been undertaken on the role parents have in fostering anti-doping behaviour in order to inform effective education strategies that utilizes their influence with young athletes in a positive way. This research aims to examine young athletes' parents' perceptions of their role in doping prevention and to identify how parents can appropriately help to spread and support a 'clean sport' message to their children.

The proposed project aims to answer the following research questions:

- what role do parents of young athletes believe they play in doping prevention?
- what challenges and barriers do parents face when engaging in anti-doping conversations with their child?
- how can the parents' role in developing young athletes' anti-doping behaviour be nurtured?

- what are the implications in terms of policy strategy and intervention for anti-doping education programmes? (aged 14-18)?