

Project WYLLEMAN

Analysis of (multi-level) factors and transitions influencing athletes' drug-taking behavior

Elite athletes have taken their sport to the next level and are often willing to make sacrifices few would even consider. Some athletes are actually 'dying to win' and are tempted to employ a variety of drugs in the hope of improving their athletic performance and physical appearance. While a lot of research has focused on the identification of doping substances and techniques abused in sports today, only very few studies have investigated developmental and multi-level factors enhancing the employment-rate of performance-enhancing drugs (e.g., Hauw & Bilard, 2011; Bilard, Ninot, & Hauw, 2010). To understand the role and impact of athletes' career transitions on drug-taking behavior, it is however important to recognize that transitions are related to several contexts (e.g., practice, competitions, lifestyle and interpersonal relationships) and interact with one another. This need for a holistic approach found its reflection in the developmental model (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004), which complements athletic career stages with stages and transitions in athletes' psychological, psychosocial, and academic/vocational development. As the model provides an overview of the stages and transitions in different spheres of life, it enables the possibility of predicting transitions that might overlap and create challenging life situations, which may make athletes vulnerable for performance enhancement drug-taking behavior (Hauw & Bilard, 2011). Using two complementary models (i.e., developmental model and theory of planned behavior) as conceptual frameworks, this study aims to: (a) identify risk factors for drug-taking behavior; (b) examine the role and impact of athletes' career transitions on (possible) drug-taking behavior; (c) investigate (former) elite athletes' attitude toward the behavior, their subjective norms and perceived control over the drug-taking behavior, and (d) develop the career profiles of athletes at risk for engagement or having engaged in drug-taking behavior.