

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



United States Anti-Doping Agency Educational Program Development Athlete Survey

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In order to develop and deliver effective educational programming in preventing and deterring doping in sport, the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) conducted an Educational Program Development Athlete Survey. The survey was designed to assess athletes' beliefs, values, and experiences about performance enhancing substances, and athlete experiences with doping control testing. In July 2001, surveys were mailed to approximately 3200 athletes, with a total of 726 athlete (23%) responses received in time to be included in the data analysis.

Both frequency counts and regression analysis were run with the data collected. Frequency count summaries can be found in a separate PDF file. The regressions are informative as they show how various survey items relate to one another. A separate Brief Regression Summary report is available for those interested.

Following are the primary regression summary points from the survey results. Each point is linked with a brief description of the educational program planning expected to address specific issues.

- **Creatine Use and Attitudes Toward Dietary Supplements.** Athletes with more permissive attitudes toward supplement use also report less concern with, or knowledge about, health consequences associated with using various substances. This issue is addressed through the creation of educational modules focused specifically on the risks of using dietary supplements, using the most recent research as a basis. To supplement these materials, models (physical and virtual) are being developed that help visually demonstrate some of the health and cosmetic consequences associated with substance use.
- **Beliefs and Attitudes Toward the Efficacy of Drug Testing.** Athletes' beliefs about the integrity of the testing process were related to other athletes' drug testing experiences. In addition, athletes responding that drug testing violated their rights also reported that drug testing causes those who don't use substances to worry about being wrongly identified as users. This is an issue that Educational Programs can help to consistently address, and it is also an issue that USADA continues to work with. With Education and Testing we continue to help athletes understand USADA's protocols and processes. As a whole it is demonstrating USADA's work as an independent agency driven by accredited standards and high integrity, and building relationships with all constituents that lead to trust.
- **Teammate Approval / Disapproval of Anabolic Steroids (and related products), Amphetamines, and Dietary Supplements, and Attitudes Toward Using Substances.** Those athletes with teammates who approve of using various performance enhancing substances, also reported a willingness to try certain substances, with creatine being at the top of the list. These athletes also believe that they would be at a competitive disadvantage if they didn't use dietary supplements. From an educational standpoint it is imperative that athletes are educated consumers. This means a need to know how to understand labels from over the counter products, and that they understand the risks associated with use of dietary supplement products that could potentially be contaminated or mislabeled. In addition to these issues, athletes will be provided with the most up-to-date information about health issues connected to creatine use. The issue of ethics in sport is an integral part of these educational efforts.
- **Encouragement from Others and Attitudes Toward Dietary Supplement Use.** Athletes reporting that choose NOT to use dietary supplements to enhance performance was related to NOT receiving encouragement to use these substances by fellow athletes and coaches to use these substances. (Associated with next bullet.)
- **Influences to NOT use Performance Enhancing Substances and Attitudes Toward Use of Steroids, Dietary Supplements, and Doping Control.** There are a variety of extrinsic factors that influence an athletes' choices around using performance enhancing substances. While some athletes cite cheating and fellow-athlete disapproval as reasons for choosing NOT to use substances, others see cost and fear of testing positive as reasons to NOT use substances. From an educational standpoint it is important to emphasize ethics, both to reinforce decisions and to raise awareness for those who do not see using substances as cheating. Along with bolstering the force of athlete solidarity for leveling the playing field, these issues are also addressed through providing a sense of vulnerability for suffering health consequences. Athletes who are deterred from use due to fear of testing positive can be reached by continuing to reinforce that vulnerability with education about the testing standards, and the risks of mistakenly testing positive associated with dietary supplement use.

- **Knowledge of Side Effects and Beliefs Concerning the Dangers of Anabolic Steroid Use.** Athletes who underestimated the side effects of anabolic steroid use were also more likely to believe that steroids were not dangerous. Anabolic steroids are obviously a prohibited substance in the Olympic Movement, however, there are related compounds that have similar health consequences. Educational programming targeted to athletes' ability to relate with, or feel a susceptibility to, experiencing side effects and/or physical and cosmetic consequences is vital. This is an area that the physical and virtual model development effectively addresses. Beyond reading information, or being 'preached' to about these issues, more powerfully athletes have an opportunity to directly experience these issues.
- **Level of Risk and Teammate Approval of Substances.** Each sport is categorized by USADA in one of three risk levels – low, medium, and high. Strong DISAPPROVAL by teammates for use of anabolic steroids, EPO, and hGH was related to participation in high risk sports. Strong APPROVAL by teammates for use of creatine was also related to participation in high risk sports. This suggests that while athletes in high risk sports disapprove of prohibited substance use, they may also want to do whatever is necessary (and acceptable within the rules) to have a perceived competitive edge. While creatine is not a prohibited substance at this time, athletes must have good information from the current literature in order to make educated choices. This includes the ability of an athlete to identify with risks for suffering acute side effects or potential long-term health consequences associated with this substance, and athletes asking themselves more philosophical questions about ethics in sport.

Conclusion

In order to most fully meet the needs of our primary population and to ensure effective resource expenditures it was imperative that we gathered information to establish a baseline of that population's beliefs, values, and experiences. The survey data provides some valuable new information, and confirms some initial assumptions, which is helpful in shaping educational programming to best meet the athletes' needs. Following is a list summarizing educational program development areas identified in the summary points above. These have been prioritized and integrated with the USADA Education Division's strategic planning agenda:

- The survey data confirms that there is a need to educate athletes about dietary supplements, specifically:
 - ⇒ The dangers of a positive test potentially associated with any dietary supplement use
 - ⇒ Knowledge of health consequences associated with stimulant products, and cumulative effects
 - ⇒ Enhanced consumer knowledge to identify various stimulant ingredients
 - ⇒ Short-term side effects, and potential health consequences associated with creatine use
- Standardized education about USADA's doping control protocols and chain of custody may help shape beliefs concerning doping control testing, and perhaps:
 - ⇒ Enhance athletes' understanding of, and trust in, USADA
 - ⇒ Help alleviate the need for athletes to rely on potentially limited personal experience with drug testing and/or the experiences of other athletes
 - ⇒ Serve to unnerve, or at least raise awareness for, athletes who have greater concerns about getting caught using substances than about values or health risks
- Health and cosmetic consequences associated with the use of anabolic steroids, and related compounds found in dietary supplement products.
- In addition to athletes, educational modules targeted to those populations that support athletes (coaches, parents, trainers) are being identified in the USADA Education Division's strategic plan.
- Educational programming must have a continual thread of ethics woven throughout all modules. This focus is multi-faceted, serving to repeatedly face the issue of ethics, fair play, and cheating. Heightened awareness is the outcome of constant exposure to information, and change is prompted based upon increased awareness.