

DOPING BY ADOLESCENT SOCCER PLAYERS

T. ENGELBERG¹, S. MOSTON²

¹Department of Psychology, College of Healthcare Sciences, James Cook University, CAIRNS, Australia.

² Department of Psychology, Central Queensland University, TOWNSVILLE, Australia

Introduction: There is evidence that between 3% to 5% of young athletes use performance enhancing drugs that are identified as doping and thereby banned under the World Anti-Doping Code. The incidence of doping varies by factors such as type of sport, age of respondents, type of drugs, and method of data collection. Soccer is one of a handful of sports not to be associated with doping. The longstanding position of authorities has been that there is no systematic doping in soccer as it is believed that doping in skill based sports offers few advantages to players.

Methods: The present study examined doping attitudes, beliefs (including perceived effect on health) and behaviours in 78 soccer players (aged 12 to 17 years). The method of data collection was a self-completion survey.

Results: It was found that 5% of the players were doping, many for image rather than performance enhancement. A quarter of players personally knew a player in their competitive grade who was using banned performance enhancing drugs. The participants estimated that about 16% of soccer players are doping.

Conclusions: The study shows that some young soccer players are doping and others express attitudes and beliefs that suggest they too may dope in the future. Young soccer players do not differ from other adolescent athletes. Soccer faces the same doping threats as other modern sports and should ensure that its coaches and administrators do not falsely believe that their players are immune to allure of doping.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR: T. Engelberg, Department of Psychology, College of Healthcare Sciences, James Cook University, CAIRNS, Australia.

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