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## BRIEF NOTE

# Attitude towards doping in Spanish Sport Sciences university students according to the type of sport practised: Individual versus team sports



*Comportement des étudiants d'universités espagnoles en sciences du sport vis-à-vis des produits dopants en fonction de la nature du sport pratiqué*

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### KEYWORDS

Doping;  
Sport;  
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Students

### Summary

**Introduction.** – The aim of this study was to understand the attitude towards performance-enhancing drugs (PED) in Spanish Sport Sciences university students and whether it varied according to the type of sport practised (individual, team, or both).

**Synopsis of the facts.** – Descriptive design was carried out by means of a validated measurement instrument to assess attitudes towards doping (Performance Enhancement Attitudes Scale [PEAS]) using a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) for different statements that support the use of doping in sport. In general, overall score (17–102) and mean score (1–6) of all the items was respectively  $34.69 \pm 9.31$ ;  $2.04 \pm 0.55$  (2 = disagree). Taking into account the type of sport practised, just for one item (“athletes have no alternative career choices, but sport”) significant differences were observed between individual sports (IS: 2.48) and the other groups team sports (TS: 2.07) and both types of sport (BS: 2.00),  $P=0.015$ .

**Conclusions.** – Spanish Sport Sciences university students in general disagree with the use of performance enhancing drugs in competitive sport. For subjects who are not professionally

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**MOTS CLÉS**

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involved in any sports, there are no differences in attitudes towards doping in relation to the type of sport practised (individual, team, or both).

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**Résumé**

*Introduction.* – L'objectif de cette étude est de comprendre le comportement d'étudiants d'universités espagnoles en sciences du sport vis-à-vis des produits dopants; il s'agissait de savoir si cette attitude variait en fonction du type de sport pratiqué (individuel, collectif ou les deux).

*Observations.* – L'étude a été réalisée au moyen d'un instrument de mesure validé afin d'évaluer la posture individuelle des étudiants face au dopage (échelle des posture face à l'amélioration des performances), en utilisant une échelle de Likert variant de 1 (fortement en désaccord) à 6 (fortement en accord) pour les différents items qui traitent du recours potentiel au dopage dans le sport. En général, le score global (17–102) et moyen (1–6) de tous les items était, respectivement de  $34,69 \pm 9,31$  et  $2,04 \pm 0,55$ ; 2 = désaccord. Nous n'avons observé de différences significatives entre les sports que pour un seul des items (« les athlètes n'ont pas d'autres choix que la carrière sportive »); il s'agit d'une différence entre les pratiquants de sports individuels (IS: 2,48) et les sports collectifs (TS: 2,07),  $p=0,015$ . En ce qui concerne les autres items, aucune différence significative n'a été observée entre les groupes.

*Conclusion.* – Les étudiants d'universités espagnoles en sciences du sport sont en désaccord avec l'usage de produits dopants améliorant la performance lors d'une compétition. Pour les sujets qui ne sont pas engagés professionnellement dans l'un de ces sports, il n'y a pas de différences d'attitudes à l'égard des produits dopants en fonction du sport pratiqué (individuel, collectif ou les deux).

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## 1. Introduction

The World Anti-Doping Code considers that two of the following three criteria must be met for a substance or method to be included on the prohibited list: that it:

- enhances or has the potential to enhance performance;
- threatens health or has the potential to do so;
- is opposite to the spirit of sport [1].

Due to the absence of more objective information on banned substances, attitudes are often used as an alternative to predict doping behaviour, assuming that those who use Performance Enhancement Drugs (PED) show greater leniency towards doping than those who stay clear of doping [1]. In order to prevent the use of prohibited substances to improve performance in sport it is important to study the attitudes towards doping in athletes, coaches or sport managers as well as in other professionals involved. These attitudes can be mediated by culture, studies, social environment [2] or the type of sport practiced [3].

Most of the studies support the hypothesis that subjects involved in individual sports (IS) are more likely to support the use of PED [3,4]. Peretti-Watel et al. [4] observed that consuming banned drugs was significantly more common in IS than in team sports (TS). Similar results were obtained by Alaranta et al. [3]. Nevertheless these results, like the majority of studies, were found by means of methods such as ad-hoc or non-validated questionnaires [1,5,6], which seriously undermines their validity and reliability.

Taking everything into account, we hypothesized that the type of sport practiced could influence attitudes of Sport Science university students towards doping. This group makes an interesting sample for study, since they will be involved in a sport context in the near future. Hence, the aim of this study was to understand the attitudes towards doping in Spanish Sport Sciences students and whether it might vary according to the type of sport practised (individual, team, or both).

## 2. Subjects and methods

### 2.1. Subjects

The sample was composed of 271 students  $22.0 \pm 3.3$  years: 221 boys, (81.5%) 50 girls, (18.5%) undertaking the Sport Sciences degree at the Faculty of Sport Sciences, University of Granada (Spain). All of them completed (by means of a personal online link) the Performance Enhancement Attitude Scale (PEAS) [5]. Participation was completely voluntary and anonymous, and subjects received a detailed explanation of the purpose and implications of the research. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Granada.

The randomized sample was representative of the Faculty of Sport Sciences of Granada ( $n=910$  students). The faculty of Sport Sciences of Granada was selected as the most representative of the country because it ranks first in Sport Sciences in Spain and was the first such faculty to be included in a University, in 1988.

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