ANTI-DOPING AND SELF-PERCEPTIONS OF THE YOUTHFUL BODY: ELITE ATHLETES’ PERSPECTIVES

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Introduction
The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) demands that all national sports groups provide an anti drugs programme for their athletes. It is therefore also necessary for each nation to regularly assess their programme in order to evaluate the areas that are successful and the areas that can be developed further. UK Sport promotes the 100% ME campaign for this purpose. This research project is a tool to monitor the perceived efficacy of the 100% ME programmes’ developments in order to gain a clearer and more critical appreciation of athletes’ values and attitudes in relation to anti-doping policies and practices, and to understand the generation of, and shifts in, those values and attitudes.

Previous assessment has focused on athletes over 21 in the peak of their athletic career. Assessment prior to this peak needs to be researched also. This provides information on how we can aid our potential future national athletes in making the best decisions about performance enhancing drugs and procedures.

Method
Talented athletes (n = 2148, age range = 12 – 21) are identified in a range of sports from all over the UK. A modified version of UK Sport’s 100% ME questionnaire (2005) is distributed. Responses are coded and analysed using a statistical analysis software package (SPSS 13.0 for Windows).

Results
Descriptive statistics are used to report the findings of two variables from the questionnaires; the participants attitudes and behaviours towards performance enhancing drugs and procedures and their perceptions of their body. Correlations are used to examine the strength of the relationship between the two variables. With a strong relationship between the two variables, regression can be used to determine the predictive abilities of these variables.

Conclusion
The implications of this research are significant for gaining a clearer understanding of athletes’ attitudes towards performance enhancing drugs in relation to their perceptions of their bodies, and how this information can be used as a tool to improve the national anti-doping programme offered to young talented athletes.

Keywords: Doping, Elite Sport, Drugs