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Drug abuse in sports: A curse of health sciences

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Abstract

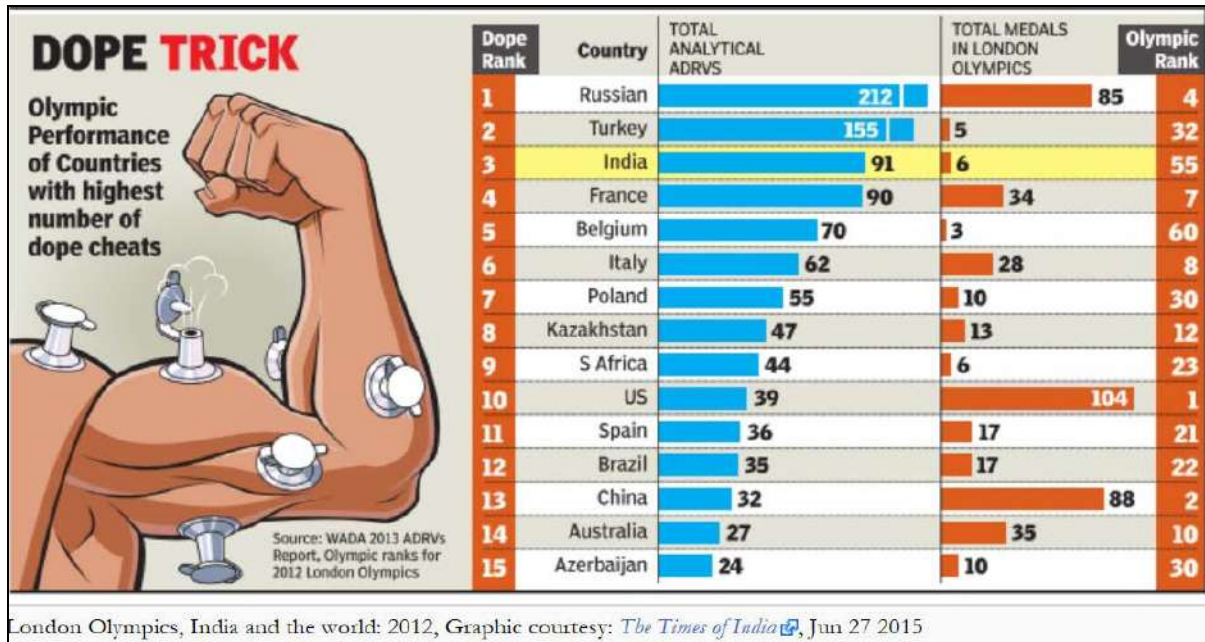
Sport is thought of an activity that is governed by a set of rules and that which is engaged in competitively, while doping is the idea of using banned natural or synthetic substance for the purpose of enhancing sports performance. Sports goes beyond a measure of athletic excellence and the winning of trophies, medals and cash awards has become a pride to the nation and sports persons. Sports teach us about honest endeavor, commitment and fair play. The use of performance enhancement drugs is very harmful to the body. Doping is a public health issue and not simply a problem inside the professional sports community. It is a complex and ancient phenomenon considering the vast variety of substances, supplied through both legal and illegal trading routes. It occurs in elite athletes but also affects amateur athletes and is generally considered as dangerous and unhealthy. The main objectives of the fight against doping in sports are the protection of health and fair competition in the defense of clean athletes.

Keywords: Drug abuse, sports, performance enhancement, doping

Introduction

A drug is any substance that causes a change in an organism's physiology and psychology when consumed. Drugs are typically distinguished from food and substances that provide nutritional support. Consumption of drugs can be via inhalation, injection, smoking, ingestion, absorption via patch on skin, or dissolution under the tongue¹. Compulsive, excessive, and self-damaging use of habit-forming drugs or substances which lead to addiction or dependence is called drug abuse. Doping refers to the use of banned drugs or substances in the competitive sports. Performance enhancing drugs (PEDs) are another term used for drugs used by athletes to improve their athletic performance^[2, 3]. Performance-enhancing drugs, or PEDs are substances used to improve performance in any form of activity. They usually work by causing the body to build more muscles or by limiting muscle fatigue. They are mostly Anabolic Steroids, synthetic versions of the male hormone Testosterone⁴. Athletic life may lead to drug abuse for a number of reasons, including for performance enhancement, to self-treat otherwise untreated mental illness, and to deal with stress, such as pressure to perform, injuries, physical pain, and retirement from sports, Lack of access to legal and natural methods to enhance performance, A determination to do anything possible to attain success

and Financial rewards with Influence from the media in facilitating these expectations and rewards^[5]. The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) monitors doping in all kinds of competitive sports. It was created in 1991, WADA is an independent international agency funded by sports organizations and associated countries. It monitors doping in sport based on the World Anti-Doping Code. At the national-level, there is the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA), an independent body under Union Ministry of Sports^[6]. For years, India maintained its dubious record of being among top 10 nations in the world in doping violations. For three years straight between 2013-15, India was ranked third, after Russia (176 violations) and Italy (129). In 2015 alone, the country had 117 sportspersons who tested positive by the list published by the World Anti-Doping Agency (Wada). It was only in 2016 that India was declared joint-sixth among the dope violator countries with 69 anti-doping rule violations (ADRV)^[7]. However, the number of dope cheats has risen significantly in the previous financial year as per the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) records. Out of the 4348 samples (urine and blood) collected, 187 have returned dope positive. For the financial year 2017 to 2018, the number of dope cheats stood at 74 out of the 3822 samples collected.



Any sportsperson competing in national or international events can be asked to give his/her blood and/or urine samples at any point of time by anti-doping agency or sports events committee during the event. Testing can be conducted in-competition and out-of-competition. Usually athletes who bag the finishing positions are tested. Sanctions for violating anti-doping regulations may range from a reprimand to a life-time ban, according to WADA. The period of ban may vary depending on the type of anti-doping violation, the circumstances of an individual case, the substance, and the possible repetition of an anti-doping rule violation. The decision to strip the medal, however, lies with the sports organisation [8-10].

Conclusion

Drug abuse occurs in all sports and at most levels of competition. Athletic life may lead to drug abuse for a number of reasons, including for performance enhancement, to self-treat otherwise untreated mental illness, and to deal with stressors, such as pressure to perform, injuries, physical pain, and retirement from sport. There are very few people whom we can call honest dopers i.e. people accepting that they have taken some kind of drugs or some banned substances but most of them simply do not accept that they have used banned drugs [11, 12]. Many sports organizations have come to ban the use of performance-enhancing drugs and have very strict consequences for people caught using them but despite continuing methodological developments to detect drug use and associated punishments for positive dope tests, there are still many athletes who choose to use performance- and image-enhancing drugs. The fight against doping is getting more and more complex in order to cope with the increasing sophistication of the doping practices used by the cheaters [13, 14]. The first step to do to prevent the recourse to the doping is to extend the knowledge on it and in particular on its dangerous effects on health. The arrival of new sponsors led to the arrival of new professionals who brought a new performance approach. Indeed, most athletes will not have enough knowledge to fully understand the potential health hazards caused by it. It is necessary,

therefore, that public and sports institutions implement information and awareness campaigns aimed particularly at young people. This can be easily achieved only with strict collaboration between the two above-mentioned institutions.

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