

Are performance and image enhancing drugs (PIEDs) an issue of concern in women?

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Introduction and Aims: The overarching aim of this study was to explore whether the use of performance and image enhancing drugs (PIED) among females is an issue of concern. The project sought to document stakeholder perspectives on the current landscape of research, policy, and practice in Australia in relation to females' PIED use.

Method: Thirty-two semi-structured interviews were conducted online (via Zoom) with stakeholders from all over Australia between September and December 2021. Interviews ranged between 15-90 minutes in duration. Data were imported into the NVivo (Version 12) platform and analysed using thematic analysis.

Results: 20 female and 12 male participants were interviewed and held a variety of roles (e.g., coach/strength coaches, gym owners, anti-doping agents, athletes). Fourteen participants reported PIED use. There were four overarching themes generated from the data: 'participation in untested sports'; 'environmental factors driving use'; 'individual rationalisation'; and, 'the dark side of PIED use'.

Discussions and Conclusions: PIED use does not appear to be an issue of concern in elite sport but is for women competing in strength sports. Of concern is the influence of unqualified advice from third parties (i.e., coaches and partners) regarding PIED use. The environments in which PIED use occurs can impact individual decisions of women and eventuate in significant and long-lasting physical and psychological harms.

Disclose of Interest: None.