

IDENTIFYING A TYPOLOGY OF MEN WHO USE ANABOLIC ANDROGENIC STEROIDS (AAS)

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Introduction and Aims:

The majority of individuals who use of AAS are not elite athletes or professional bodybuilders. Despite recognition that the AAS using population is diverse, "there has been only limited scholarly attempt to develop theories and conceptualise the variance in use (p.1)."[1] In this study we identify AAS user typologies and examine variations in motivations for AAS use across types. The aim is to better understand diversity in motivations for AAS use, different patterns of use and potential for risk.

Design and Methods:

This study uses cluster analysis to identify AAS user typologies in a sample of over 610 men who use AAS recruited through needle and syringe programs and gyms in England and Wales. We employ multinomial logistic regression to examine whether AAS user typology, is predicted by current age; age first used AAS and/or motivations for using AAS.

Results:

The cluster analysis identified four groups in the data with different risk profiles. These groups reflect the ideal types of AAS users proposed by Christiansen and colleagues[1]: Cluster 1 (*You Only Live Once (YOLO)* type, n=68, 11.1%) were younger and motivated by fat loss; Cluster 2 (*Well-being* type, n=236, 38.6%) were concerned with getting fit; Cluster 3 (*Athlete* type, n=155, 25.4%) were motivated by muscle and strength gains; Cluster 4 (*Expert* type, n=152, 24.9%) were focused on specific goals (i.e. not 'getting fit').

Discussions and Conclusions:

The results provide support for the existence of AAS subpopulations that differ in regards to patterns of use, motivations for use and risk suggesting that harm minimisation approaches should be targeted to different types of user groups.

Implications for Practice or Policy:

That we currently lack a clear conceptualisation of the contemporary 'steroid user may explain why approaches to prevention and harm minimisation remain largely focused on athletes and doping in sport. The results of this study demonstrate the need to make information about AAS accessible to the general population. In particular, attention should be given to disseminating information about safe intra-muscular injecting and ensuring needle disposal sites are accessible.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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References

1. Christiansen, A. V., Vinther, A. S., & Liokaftos, D. (2016). Outline of a typology of men's use of anabolic androgenic steroids in fitness and strength training environments*. *Drugs: education, prevention and policy*, 1-11. doi:10.1080/09687637.2016.1231173