How are anabolic-androgenic steroid communities navigating Trenbolone use? Insights into community-led risk reduction

Timothy Piatkowski[1,2,3], Nick Gibbs[4], David Neumann[1,2], Matthew Dunn[5]

[1]School of Applied Psychology, Griffith University, Gold Coast, Australia
[2]Griffith Centre for Mental Health, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia
[3]Queensland Injectors Voice for Advocacy and Action, Queensland, Australia
[4] Department of Social Sciences, Northumbria University, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England
[5] Institute for Health Transformation, Deakin University, Geelong, Australia

Presenter's email: *t.piatkowski@griffith.edu.au*

Introduction: Trenbolone is an anabolic-androgenic steroid (AAS) known for promoting rapid muscle growth but is associated with significant health risks. This study adopts a critical approach to explore the experiences of Trenbolone users and their strategies for risk reduction, aiming to understand how consumers mitigate the harms associated with Trenbolone use.

Methods: We purposively sampled individuals aged 18 and above who used Trenbolone and conducted semi-structured interviews. The interviews explored participants' knowledge, usage experiences, and harm reduction strategies. The analysis employed an iterative categorisation approach.

Results: The study involved 30 Trenbolone users, predominantly male, with a mean age of 34 years (*SD* = 8 years). Most participants were from Australia (*n*=22), with others from Thailand, India, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the Netherlands. Initial benefits reported included increased confidence and muscle gain, but prolonged use led to physical (e.g., kidney issues) and psychosocial (e.g., rapid mood changes) harms. Participants recommended safer-use strategies and health monitoring for reducing these risks.

Discussions and Conclusions: Despite its appeal for rapid muscle growth, Trenbolone use is acknowledged by consumers to carry significant health risks. Leveraging participants' insights, we identified community-driven risk management practices, highlighting the critical role of peer networks in harm reduction for Trenbolone use.

Implications for Practice or Policy: These findings emphasise the need for harm reduction approaches to include community-led safer-use information, an area which remains underdeveloped for AAS communities particularly. Trenbolone provides a vehicle to consider community-led strategies more fully and, thus, for researchers to innovate alongside the steroid-using community.

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