

A systematic review investigating the psychosocial factors influencing initiation, use, and subjective experience of performance and image-enhancing drugs (PIEDs) in female weight-training populations

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Introduction and Aims: Research into performance-and-image enhancing drug (PIED) use and the subsequent development of harm-reduction measures, has been overwhelmingly involved male populations and been focussed on male-use patterns. Despite this, recent data suggests that use of PIEDs is on the rise among females.

In this study, we systematically reviewed the existing literature on the topic to explore (i) the predictors of PIED initiation among female weight-training populations and (ii) the relationship between different psychosocial phenomena and weight-training females' use of PIEDs, at various stages of use.

Method: A mixed-methods systematic review of relevant literature was conducted using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA). A targeted search strategy, using combinations of key words, was developed and databases searched included: PubMed, PsycInfo, CINAHL, Scopus- Web of Science. 14 studies were included following review and quality appraisal. Using a thematic approach, data was extracted, coded and analysed.

Results: Four themes emerged relating to the use of PIEDs among female weight-training populations. These themes described body image and its social meaning, the influence of male voices, the meaning and limits of femininity and, unique psychological processes surrounding women's PIED use.

Discussion and Conclusions: This review forms part of a larger project on PIED drug use in women. The unique psychosocial factors that are present in the initiation and overall experiences of PIEDs for female weight-training athletes would suggest that there needs to unique harm reduction, intervention and education tools, catered specifically for the needs of this population.

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