

Anabolic steroids may affect future mental health

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There is a link between use of anabolic-androgenic steroids and reduced mental health later in life. This is the main conclusion of a new study on elite male strength athletes that researchers from the University of Gothenburg recently published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*. Twenty per cent of the subjects in the study admitted steroid use.

The study is published by CERA, which is the University of Gothenburg's centre for education and research on addiction. Together with colleagues from Sahlgrenska University Hospital, they found a connection between abuse of anabolic-androgenic steroids (AAS) and mental health problems many years later.

The study included almost 700 former Swedish wrestlers, weightlifters, powerlifters and throwers who competed at the elite level sometime between 1960 and 1979. Twenty per cent of them admitted using steroids during their active careers. The purpose of the study was to look for links between AAS use and mental problems.

'We found a clear link. AAS users were more likely to have been treated for depression, concentration problems and [aggressive behaviour](#),' says Claudia Fahlke, director at CERA.

The researchers also found that AAS users were more likely to have abused other [illicit drugs](#) and alcohol. However, it remains unclear whether the steroid use actually caused the mental health problems or the [mental health problems](#) rather caused the steroid use.

'What we were able to show, though, is that [psychiatric symptoms](#) and use of steroids and other drugs tend to reinforce each other in a vicious cycle. This suggests that the anti-doping efforts remain very important, both in and outside of sports,' says Fahlke.

More information: Lindqvist, A. et al. A retrospective 30-year follow-up study of former Swedish-elite male athletes in power sports with a past anabolic androgenic steroids use: a focus on mental health, *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 23 April 2013.
www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23613517

Provided by University of Gothenburg

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