

Study suggests sports coaches are crucial to anti-doping attitudes amongst athletes

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A study examining Scottish coaches' perspectives on anti-doping has highlighted the influence a coach can have on an athlete's views. It also calls for sport governing bodies to embed anti-doping policies and procedures to ensure Scotland maintains its clean reputation.

The study was commissioned by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and conducted by coaching and anti-doping experts at the University of Stirling, Scotland's University for Sporting Excellence.

They interviewed Scottish performance coaches and found the country's excellent anti-doping record is heavily linked to coaches' anti-doping attitudes, but also suggested the [coach](#)'s role is not being maximized as it

should.

"We found there was a strong stance from Scottish coaches towards anti-doping and their ethos is based on athletes achieving success through hard work and not through taking any shortcuts," explained Dr Justine Allen, Lecturer in Sports Coaching and lead author of the study.

"In that respect, the foundations are there, but many coaches said they lacked knowledge around anti-doping and for some it was a low priority due to the established anti-doping culture in the UK and few incidents in their sport.

"There are very good examples of anti-doping best practice and integrated programmes in some governing bodies, but this tends to be in sports with a history of doping issues internationally when it should be across the board. There is a need to establish clear roles and responsibilities within each governing body of sport in relation to anti-doping.

"It might be the responsibility of the coach, an anti-doping officer or the physio; it's up to the governing body to determine the best fit for them, but the crucial thing is that they define the responsibilities clearly as it should be an around the clock role – not just at a tournament or doctor's appointment. If it is clear where the responsibility lies, it becomes a priority for them and they are more likely to ask themselves if they know enough and seek out available education."

The study also recommended developing further case study examples on how and when to engage athletes and coaches in anti-doping conversations and experiences. It also suggests integrating anti-doping information into wider topics such as optimising performance preparation and recovery where discussion might include nutrition and supplement use as well as anti-doping.

However, the study also acknowledged the coaches' limitations. Dr Allen added: "I don't think the coaches can be absolved of responsibility towards anti-doping and all of the coaches we interviewed agreed with that, but while the public might think it should be the coaches' responsibility, the coaches we spoke to were clear they don't have full control over what the athletes do.

"In Scotland most athletes are not full-time professional athletes, nor are the coaches necessarily, so they don't see one another all the time and there is a lot of trust and responsibility put on the [athlete](#). For instance, if they go to their GP, it's up to them to intimate they are a competing athlete so they don't receive medication which contains a banned substance."

WADA President Sir Craig Reddie welcomed the findings. He said: "This study has been insightful in highlighting the importance of anti-doping policies, and the role coaches and the athlete entourage may play in influencing athletes.

"Whilst the study offers just a snapshot from one country, it certainly validates the view that WADA has towards athlete support personnel and the fact that those who surround the athlete, including coaches, can strongly influence an athlete's decision-making. This influence is an area that has been reflected by WADA in the revised World Anti-Doping Code, which will take effect from January 1, 2015.

"The results of this study show that education of athletes and their support personnel is a crucial part of any anti-doping program. At WADA, we provide many resources aimed at providing anti-doping information to athletes, coaches and other stakeholders such as teachers and physicians so that those involved can make the right decisions."

Other members of the Stirling team conducting the study were:

Professor Leigh Robinson, Professor of Sport Management; Dr Paul Dimeo, Senior Lecturer in sports policy; Sarah Dixon and Rhiannon Morris.

It follows a recent study of 200 Scottish athletes which found they are less likely to be tempted to take drugs if they are part of a team.

More information: Read the full study here: [www.wada-ama.org/Documents/Edu ... N-Final-2012-ENG.pdf](http://www.wada-ama.org/Documents/Edu...N-Final-2012-ENG.pdf)

Provided by University of Stirling

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