

Scapegoating steroids is harmful

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Scott Griffiths is a PhD candidate at the University of Sydney's School of Psychology who is currently conducting research on muscle dysmorphia, appearance and performance-enhancing drug use.

In the context of current debates around increasing steroid use and the link with alcohol abuse and aggressive behaviour Griffiths said:

Scapegoating steroid use for violent behaviour distracts us from the debate on [alcohol abuse](#) and makes it more difficult for steroid users to come forward.

Steroid use is on the rise and there have been recent documented cases of individuals involved in alcohol-linked violence also using [steroids](#).

But the concept of 'roid rage' has been sensationalised. Most steroid users, even those on high doses, do not succumb to roid rage. A bad apple effect is going on where the violent behaviour of a few users has come to form a stereotype about all users.

This stereotype is reinforced by high-profile cases of [violent behaviour](#) involving steroids where the role of steroids is seized upon by the media. Other factors are often downplayed or forgotten.

We know little about the stigma that steroid users and people with [muscle dysmorphia](#) experience, but the stereotype of them being 'dumb, dangerous drug-users' seems to crop-up frequently in the media.

Stereotypes around steroid use may mean that men struggling with muscle dysmorphia, where a person has an obsession with their body image and often uses steroids to build their muscularity, may be less likely to come forward for treatment.

Body pressures on men are increasing and more and more men are going to think about taking steroids. Some will ultimately make decisions to take them.

We do not condone steroid use, but we want [men](#) who use steroids to be able to talk about them with health professionals without the fear that they will automatically be labelled dangerous ticking time-bombs. Negative stereotypes about steroids disrupt this important conversation.

Provided by University of Sydney

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