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Prevalence of Prohibited Substance Use and Methods by Female Athletes: Evidence of Gender-Related Differences

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INTRODUCTION:

To achieve optimal sports performances, women and men may show specific doping practices because of the physiological and psychological gender differences, but there are few data on this topic.

METHODS:

Here, we report the apparent use of prohibited substances and methods by female athletes based on analyses of the doping tests collected by the French Anti-Doping Agency from 2013 to 2019. We compared the frequency of use and the ergogenic and side effects to those of their male counterparts.

RESULTS:

The results revealed lower use of prohibited substances in female vs. male athletes, with significantly fewer anabolic agents, hormone and metabolic modulators, and cannabinoids. Gender specificity in utilization of substance classes was also shown.

CONCLUSION:

Relatively lower use of hormone modulators and cannabinoids and higher use of beta-2 agonists, diuretics and glucocorticoids were found in the woman cohort compared with men cohort, combined with the different choice of substances, possibly because of the altered ergogenic and/or side effects. However, no impact due to gender regarding the sports disciplines was observed, with both women and men showing similar use of anabolic agents, mainly in the anaerobic sports, and EPO and corticoids, mainly in endurance or mixed sports.

Topic: Health and Fitness

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