

Medical Group Warns of Danger of Performance-Enhancing Drugs



The Endocrine Society is warning about the health consequences of taking performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs).

The vast majority of people who use these drugs are non-athlete weightlifters, *News-Medical.net* reports.

In a new scientific statement, the Endocrine Society notes media attention about PEDs has focused on their use by elite athletes in order to gain a competitive advantage in sports. "There is a widespread misperception that PED use is safe or that adverse effects are manageable," the statement notes.

PED use has been linked to an increased risk of death and a wide variety of health problems. In the long term, PEDs can cause impotence, worsening acne, balding and "steroid rage." PEDs can also stunt growth in adolescents. More serious effects include heart and liver damage, and an increased risk of blood clots.

"There is a widespread misperception that PED use is safe or that adverse effects are manageable," said Shalender Bhasin, MD of Brigham and Women's Hospital, who chaired the task force that developed the statement. "The truth is, PED use has been linked to increased risk of death and a wide variety of cardiovascular, psychiatric, metabolic, renal and musculoskeletal disorders."

PED users at greatest risk for health consequences are those who become dependent on the drugs, and use them over many years. Nearly one-third of people who use anabolic steroids will develop dependence on the drugs, and about one million men have experienced dependence on the steroids at some time, the article notes.

Both athletes and non-athlete weightlifters who use PEDs often engage in other high-risk health behaviors, including using alcohol or opioids along with steroids, according to the group.