

Poster presentation

## A league of their own, too: motivational and age of onset comparisons between American male and female AAS users

Jay Cohen<sup>1</sup>, Rick Collins\*<sup>2</sup>, Jack Darkes<sup>3</sup> and Daniel Gwartney<sup>4</sup>

Address: <sup>1</sup>American School of Professional Psychology, Clinical Psychology Department, Washington, DC, USA, <sup>2</sup>Collins, McDonald & Gann, P.C., Mineola, NY, USA, <sup>3</sup>Department of Psychology, University of South Florida, USA and <sup>4</sup>Columbia, MO, USA

Email: Rick Collins\* - rickesq@optonline.net

\* Corresponding author

from 2008 International Society of Sports Nutrition Conference and Expo Las Vegas, NV, USA. 9–10 June 2008

Published: 17 September 2008

*Journal of the International Society of Sports Nutrition* 2008, **5**(Suppl 1):P26 doi:10.1186/1550-2783-5-S1-P26

This abstract is available from: <http://www.jissn.com/content/5/S1/P26>

© 2008 Cohen et al; licensee BioMed Central Ltd.

### Background

Non-medical anabolic-androgenic steroid (NMAAS) use among athletes and risk-taking adolescents has monopolized media attention in recent years. Conversely, our large-scale study of almost 2000 American male NMAAS users revealed that the majority of adult were non-athletes who initiated use as adults and were not motivated by athletics. Notably, a small proportion of the sample that completed our Internet-based survey was females and it would be informative to describe differences in age of onset and motivations between male and female users.

### Methods

U.S.-based NMAAS users (n = 1955 male & n = 37 female; about 1.85%) were recruited from various Internet websites dedicated to resistance training activities and use of ergogenic substances, mass emails, and print media to participate in a 291-item web-based survey. For this presentation, items assessing age of onset of NMAAS use and motivation for use are explored.

### Results

Most NMAAS users did not initiate use during adolescence nor was their use motivated by athletics. The typical male and female user were Caucasian, highly-educated (female users evidenced a slightly higher prevalence of advanced degrees), gainfully employed professionals approximately 30 years of age, who were earning an above-average income, were not active in organized sports, and whose use was motivated by increases in skeletal muscle mass,

strength, and physical attractiveness. In addition, female use was motivated by a desire to reduce body fat and amateur bodybuilding endeavors and a greater percentage of female users reported involvement in competitive bodybuilding. The average female began using AAS at age 29, 4–5 years after beginning weight training, and had used for a total of 5.1 years, while the average male initiated use at age 26, 5–6 years after they began weight training, and had been using for a total of 5.6 years.

### Conclusion

Few notable gender differences emerged for age of initiation or motivations for NMAAS use. The typical female adult NMAAS user initiated use in her late 20s, slightly later than her typical male counterpart, after a similar number of years training. Although females shared most motivations with male users, they were also motivated by a desire to decrease body fat and competitive bodybuilding. Adult NMAAS users appeared to be a relatively homogeneous and high-functioning group. Hence, the focus on "cheating" athletes and at-risk youth may lead to ineffective policy as it relates to the predominant group of NMAAS users. The larger population of NMAAS users is likely to dismiss such concerns as irrelevant to their own use. Effective policy, prevention or intervention should address the target population(s) and their reasons for use while utilizing their desire for responsible use and education.

## Acknowledgements

The authors have no conflicts of interest in relation to this presentation.

Publish with **BioMed Central** and every scientist can read your work free of charge

*"BioMed Central will be the most significant development for disseminating the results of biomedical research in our lifetime."*

Sir Paul Nurse, Cancer Research UK

Your research papers will be:

- available free of charge to the entire biomedical community
- peer reviewed and published immediately upon acceptance
- cited in PubMed and archived on PubMed Central
- yours — you keep the copyright

Submit your manuscript here:  
[http://www.biomedcentral.com/info/publishing\\_adv.asp](http://www.biomedcentral.com/info/publishing_adv.asp)

