The Use of Stimulant Medication to Treat Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder in Elite Athletes: A Performance and Health Perspective.

Garner AA, Hansen AA, Baxley C, Ross MJ.


Abstract

The use of stimulants as a treatment for attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) among elite athletes is a controversial area with some arguing that stimulant use should not be permitted because it offers an advantage to athletes (fair play perspective). Guided by an integrated model of athletic performance, we address common concerns raised about stimulant use in sports from our perspective, which we coined the "performance and health perspective," highlighting relevant research and pointing to gaps in empirical research that should be addressed before bans on use of stimulants for athletes with ADHD are considered. The current article posits that a stimulant ban for athletes with ADHD does not necessarily facilitate fair play, ensure safety, or align with existing policies of large governing bodies. Instead, we recommend that stimulant medication be allowed in high-level sport, following proper diagnosis by a trained professional and a cardiac assessment to confirm no underlying heart conditions. Athletes with ADHD approved to use stimulant medication should be monitored by a health care professional, physically reevaluated and reassessed for ADHD as clinically appropriate and as indicated by relevant sports governing bodies. This performance and health perspective is consistent with that of multiple sport governing bodies who offer therapeutic use.