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Knowledge, attitudes and practices of anabolic steroid usage among gym users in Trinidad.

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Self-administered questionnaires were completed by 1062 gym-users in 14 gyms in Trinidad from February 1997 to July 1997 to determine the knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding anabolic steroids (AS). Five hundred and sixty (52.7%) females and 502 (48.3%) males completed the questionnaire. Half of the total sample were individuals in the 20 to 29 year age group. From the 17 questions that tested knowledge about AS, the median number of correct responses was 7 with a mode of 8. Increased muscle mass was correctly identified as one of the effects of AS by 841 respondents (79.2%), while 249 (23.6%) of the total sample thought asthma was treated with AS. Most (872 or 82.1%) felt that their knowledge about AS was inadequate and 700 (66.0%) were of the opinion that AS should be banned from use in competitive sports. Similarly, 733 (70.0%) of the gym-users thought AS should only be available by prescription. Thirty respondents reported having used AS (2.9%, 95% CI 2.0-4.1). The prevalence of AS use was higher among males than females ( $p < 0.001$ ). Improvement of physical appearance and not competitive advantage in sport was the main reason cited for AS use. Anabolic steroid users knew more about the adverse effects of AS than non-AS users but the therapeutic uses of AS were comparatively less well known. This study demonstrated a general lack of knowledge concerning AS use and that a small but significant proportion of persons using gyms admitted to abusing AS.

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