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The Anabolic 500 survey: characteristics of male users versus nonusers of anabolic-androgenic steroids for strength training.

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Abstract

STUDY OBJECTIVE: To contrast the characteristics of two groups of men who participated in strength-training exercise—those who reported anabolic-androgenic steroid (AAS) use versus those who reported no AAS use.

DESIGN: Analysis of data from the Anabolic 500, a cross-sectional survey.

PARTICIPANTS: Five hundred six male self-reported AAS users (mean age 29.3 yrs) and 771 male self-reported nonusers of AAS (mean age 25.2 yrs) who completed an online survey between February 19 and June 30, 2009.

MEASUREMENTS AND MAIN RESULTS: Respondents were recruited from Internet discussion boards of 38 fitness, **bodybuilding**, weightlifting, and steroid Web sites. The respondents provided online informed consent and completed the Anabolic 500, a 99-item Web-based survey. Data were collected on demographics, use of AAS and other performance-enhancing agents, alcohol and illicit drug use, substance dependence disorder, other Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision diagnoses, and history of sexual and/or physical abuse. Most (70.4%) of the AAS users were recreational exercisers who reported using an average of 11.1 performance-enhancing agents in their routine. Compared with nonusers, the AAS users were more likely to meet criteria for substance dependence disorder (23.4% vs 11.2%, $p < 0.001$), report a diagnosis of an anxiety disorder (10.1% vs 6.1%, $p = 0.010$), use cocaine within the past 12 months (11.3% vs 4.7%, $p < 0.001$), and report a history of sexual abuse (6.1% vs 2.7%, $p = 0.005$).

CONCLUSION: Most of the AAS users in this study were recreational exercisers who practiced polypharmacy. The AAS users were more likely than nonusers to meet criteria for substance dependence disorder, report a diagnosis of an anxiety disorder, report recent cocaine use, and have a history of sexual abuse. The information uncovered in this study may help clinicians and researchers develop appropriate intervention strategies for AAS abuse.

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MeSH Terms, Substances

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