

“Performance-Enhancing” Drugs *Where’s the Beef?*

Depiction Suggestions

The following points for consideration on the portrayal of “performance-enhancing” drugs were created as a resource for entertainment development and production. They are not intended to limit the creative process.

Steroids:

- ◆ When portraying someone using steroids, remember that the effects of the drug typically are not immediate like most other drugs.
- ◆ Although many recent studies on steroid use have focused on adolescents rather than adults, recognize that the prevalence is also widespread among those over age 25.
- ◆ If your production calls for an athlete to use steroids in any form, try to show athletes who are not in agreement with the drug use.
- ◆ Be aware of the medical situations that can come to light when steroids have been used extensively (i.e., fluid retention, high blood pressure, and jaundice). Even steroid-based prescription medications, used over the long term, can lead to cataracts on the eyes.
- ◆ While steroid use can provide an enhanced physical appearance, it can simultaneously disrupt normal sex drive and sexual performance.
- ◆ Use among adult or professional athletes has not been well documented, although anecdotal evidence clearly supports the suggestion that anabolic steroids have enjoyed popularity among football players, weightlifters, swimmers, bodybuilders, and track and field competitors (both male and female).
- ◆ Many maintain a pattern of use with anabolic steroids acquired through a highly organized black market handling up to \$400 million worth of drugs a year.
- ◆ Remember that some effects, such as rapid weight gain, are easy to see. Some take place internally and may not be evident until it is too late. Some are irreversible.
- ◆ Try to reflect the reality that the majority of amateur and professional athletes do not use steroids. Avoid reinforcing the false image that steroid use is a normal, every day activity.
- ◆ Attempt to realistically reflect steroid use as a potentially addictive and dangerous behavior rather than as a positive social activity.
- ◆ Unless a character’s steroid use truly reveals something important about the character, consider other unique behaviors as creative alternatives that might convey the same information.
- ◆ Drug-prevention billboards can be used as a location set piece.
- ◆ The use of educational posters in scenes can send a subtle anti-drug message in such places as schools, health clubs, YMCAs and YWCAs, public playgrounds, and other locales where people are engaged in athletic activities.

(For more information on educational posters or additional materials, please call the Entertainment Industries Council, Inc., 800-783-3421.)

- ◆ When making creative decisions about the behavior of a character, bear in mind that young people view steroid use in entertainment as a kind of role modeling. Will others, especially young people, want to emulate the behavior of your character?
- ◆ "Roid rage" can result when steroid-using characters become unnecessarily violent as a result of the effects of hormonal changes on aggressive tendencies.

Sexual-Enhancement Drugs:

- ◆ Unless the purpose is to demonstrate or make a point of the potential reasons or motivation underlying such abuse, attempt to avoid showing characters abusing Viagra.
 - ◆ Bear in mind that there are other ways to overcome erectile dysfunction or reduced libido. Consider incorporating these alternatives.
 - ◆ Avoid having doctors recommend Viagra as the automatic and only possible solution to all erectile dysfunction or reduced libido problems, thereby suggesting that physicians casually provide Viagra prescriptions.
- ◆ When possible, try not to portray characters with Viagra prescriptions distributing the medication to friends or family, in essence encouraging health care insurance fraud. A possible and useful exception might be to use this Viagra abuse as the means of having the user manifest one of Viagra's side effects (see Fact Sheet, "Performance-Enhancing" Drugs).

Spotlight on Depiction of Health and Social Issues

Proprietary To:

Entertainment Industries Council, Inc.

www.eiconline.org

1760 Reston Parkway, Ste. 415 • Reston, VA 20190-3303
Telephone: (703) 481-1414 • Fax: (703) 481-1418

500 S. Buena Vista St • Burbank, CA 91521-7283
Telephone: (818) 955-6845 • Fax: (818) 955-6870

“Performance-Enhancing” Drugs

Fact Sheet

Steroids:

- ◆ Lifetime prevalence of anabolic steroid use among high school seniors fluctuated from a low of 1.9 percent in 1996 to 2.9 percent in 1999.¹
- ◆ Among the class of 1999, 2.9 percent of high school seniors had used anabolic steroids at least once in their lifetimes, up from the class of 1998’s 2.7 percent lifetime use. Past-year use among seniors had been stable at 1.4 percent from 1991 to 1997, yet increased to 1.7 percent in 1998 and 1.8 percent in 1999.²
- ◆ In 1999, 2.7 percent of eighth graders and 2.7 percent of 10th graders had used anabolic steroids at least once in their lifetimes, and 1.7 percent of eighth graders and of 10th graders had used anabolic steroids within the past year.³
- ◆ The survey, *Monitoring the Future*, reported high school seniors’ attitudes toward steroid use. Students’ perceptions about the harmfulness of taking steroids and the trends in their disapproval of the use of steroids have remained relatively stable in the 1990s.⁴
 1. Sixty-one percent of 12th graders perceive great risk in taking steroids.
 2. Eighty-nine percent of seniors say they disapprove of people who use steroids.

3. Forty-five percent of seniors feel it would be fairly or very easy for them to get steroids.

Health Consequences:

- ◆ Reports indicate that the use of anabolic steroids produces increases in lean muscle mass, strength, and ability to train longer and harder, but long-term, high-dose effects of steroid use are largely unknown.⁵
- ◆ Many short-term effects of anabolic steroids are reversible.⁶
- ◆ The major side effects of anabolic steroid use includes liver tumors, jaundice (yellowish pigmentation of skin, tissues, and body fluids), fluid retention, and high blood pressure; others are severe acne and trembling.⁷
- ◆ Men and women have gender-specific side effects:⁸
 1. Men: shrinking of the testicles, reduced sperm count, infertility, and baldness.
 2. Women: growth of facial hair, changes in menstrual cycle, and a deepened voice.

Sexual-Enhancement Drugs:

- ◆ Viagra is the most widely known sexual-enhancing drug. Many symptoms and side

effects have been associated with this drug, such as anxiety, hypertension, erectile dysfunction, vaginal dryness, and loss of genital sensation.⁹

◆ The Androderm patch (for men) is also used as a sexual-enhancing drug. The most common side effects are reduced libido, reduced energy, and erectile dysfunction.¹⁰

Sources:

1-3. National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), NIDA Infobox, *Anabolic Steroids*, 1999.

4. L. Johnston, University of Michigan, *Monitoring the Future*, National Survey Results, 1997.

5. NIDA, NIDA Infobox, *Anabolic Steroids*, pp 1-2, 1999.

6. Partnership for a Drug-Free America, www.drugfreeamerica.org, May 2000.

7-8. NIDA, NIDA Infobox, *Anabolic Steroids*, pp. 1-2, 1999.

9-10. K. Roderick, *Sex Enhancing Drugs for Men and Women*, 1997.

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