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Position statement on PED use and the SEM Doctor

The use of performance enhancing drugs has escalated in recent times and is no longer the preserve of the elite athlete. Abuse has spread to the recreational and non-athletic populations where PED misuse is common for the goals of body and physique enhancement. The doctor engaged in SEM must be mindful of the prevalence of this trend and use his or her role to foster a healthy and drug free environment.

SEM doctors must be aware of the escalating risk of use of PEDs in underage sport and reinforce the danger associated with this practice when dealing with this particularly vulnerable sporting population.

Great care must be taken when applying for a Therapeutic Use Exemption [TUE]. The use of this exemption clause permits a sportsman or woman perform to the maximum of their abilities, without restriction caused by illnesses or disease. It is not a loophole to be used to permit the use of a banned substance and facilitate performance enhancement. A doctor has to be intimately involved in this process and must ensure the veracity of the TUE claim.

A doctor involved in SEM must be cognisant of medical ethics and the oath he/she has taken. In matters of PED abuse there is an over reliance on the rules of sport and the legality or otherwise in sport of taking a banned or prescribed substance for a non-medical and performance enhancing effect. The doctor must ensure that his/her professional code is not compromised wittingly or unwittingly.

Doctors engaged in the practice of SEM must be mindful that they alone, unlike other non-medical advisors, have to comply with the ethics of their profession. They will not be judged on the guidelines set by a particular sport and its governing bodies, but rather on their professional performance relating to their code of ethics.

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