

**Interview with Allison Holloway, Chair of the Working Group on Education of the Monitoring Group of the Anti-Doping Convention (27.06.2006)**



**Question:** *As Chair of the Working Group on Education of the Monitoring Group of the Anti-Doping Convention, could you give us your opinion on what the main challenges are for anti-doping educational programmes in the oncoming years?*

With a relatively modest percentage of adverse analytical findings a year, anti-doping education teams are challenged to identify precisely where to target their education programmes in order to combat the misuse of drugs in sport. To begin to meet this challenge, education programmes need to achieve at least two aims; i) to provide ongoing information, support and advice to elite athletes committed to competing in doping-free sport so to prevent inadvertent doping, and ii) to better understand the attitudes, values and behaviours of elite and potential athletes in order to target education that shapes these values.

In light of the increased responsibility on athletes as a result of the World Anti-Doping Code (particularly in relation to TUE and Whereabouts requirements), we are challenged to increase our efforts to ensure that a) athletes understand the need for anti-doping rules and procedures and b) to avoid losing athlete confidence and support for drug-free sport.

**Question:** *In your opinion, are the athletes sufficiently informed and educated on doping issues? What measures do the governments take to educate young athletes?*

Traditionally, anti-doping education programmes have placed more emphasis on information provision as opposed to education delivery. This approach requires athletes to take responsibility for their own learning, expecting them to interpret the complex and extensive rules and procedures of anti-doping without interaction or clarification. Anti-doping organizations have a firm commitment to informing athletes with various published, online and multimedia resources, all of which are helpful in outlining the role and responsibilities of athletes and support personnel. In saying that, with the amount of information available from WADA, International Federations and NADOs, there is no reason why an athlete competing in elite level sport should dope inadvertently, however, if we are to influence the decision one may make to engage in doping activities, we must better understand the mindset of athletes that are prepared to 'win at all costs'.

**Question:** *In your opinion, what is the most common misconception in the general public about doping and what is the message you would like to communicate to correct this?*

A misconception of the general public and one that needs to be addressed is that the majority of athletes are not committed to competing cleanly in sport. To fuel this misconception the media focus more willingly on tales of deceit in relation to doping in sport and rarely promote the clean success of athletes. Through education initiatives I would like to see that athletes committed to doping-free sport are given a platform in which to promote this important message. This would help create a positive culture in which athletes would be proud to associate with.

In my experience, the greatest threat to our education efforts is for anti-doping organizations to lose the confidence and support of the athletes for what is essentially a system designed to protect their right to a level playing field.

More can always be done to learn from one another, and in particular to learn from athletes, to understand their misconceptions, to address their concerns and to increase their confidence that we are unyielding in our fight against doping in sport.