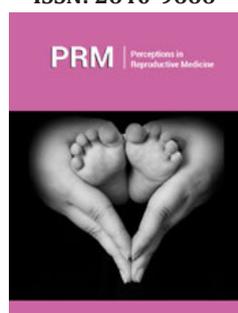


A Review on Abortion Doping Discussion in Athletes: Is it a Truth or a Myth?

Seyda Belfin Aydin*

Turkey

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*Corresponding author: Seyda Belfin Aydin, Turkey

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Introduction

The ethical effects and results of having an abortion has been a current discussion for many years. The media has boosted with claims abortion must be prohibited while feminist movements has always supported abortion in their claims. Even female athletes have been the supporters of abortion. On the other side, there are serious ideas and views that abortion is a crime, taking a live of a little human being. Thus, in the light of these discussions while they have been still on the hits, abortion doping among female athletes have come into question. Is it a legal procedure that had been practiced or is it a myth? Sports arena had benefited from abortion among female athletes.

The fact is so crucial that abortion doping which is a term to define having abortion after the games had been practiced frequently among athletes. This procedure is a legal performed action and the practice is not considered illegal by the IOC. Abortion doping is not on the World Anti-Doping Agency's current list of prohibited substances or methods. To speak frankly, it is seen that pregnant athletes have a more chance to win the games because their bodies react differently. It is known that hormonal and other changes in pregnancy affect physical performance. In the first three months of pregnancy a woman's body produces a natural surplus of red blood cells, which are well supplied with oxygen-carrying hemoglobin, in order to support the growing fetus.

Moreover, other potential advantages are obtained from the surge in hormones that pregnancy induces, predominantly progesterone and estrogen, but also testosterone, which could increase muscle strength. Indeed, increases in hormones like relaxin, which loosens the hip joints to prepare for childbirth, may have a performance-enhancing effect on joint mobility. Peter Larkins, an official of the Australian Sports Medicine Association, opined that the advantages of abortion doping would be "far outweighed by the drawbacks of morning sickness and fatigue" which are common in early pregnancy.

Method

A recent report from Great Britain reveals that female athletes in Eastern Bloc countries are improving their performances by deliberately becoming pregnant and then having abortions. As athletes' muscle power greatly increases during the first month of pregnancy, the athletes boost their strength by becoming pregnant through artificial dissemination. When the optimum benefit has been derived from the pregnancy, the athletes undergo suction abortions to get rid of pregnancy benefiting from energy [1]. "Creating the perfect athlete". Finnish sport medicine expert Dr. Risto Erkola says that "It is horrible and immoral. Now that drug testing s routine, pregnancy has becoming the favorite way of getting an edge on the competitors [1]. "Creating the perfect athlete").

To search literature, it is seen that the topic of pregnancy and abortion doping was initially identified in 2004 as a potential barrier to healthy student-athlete pregnancy, specifically as a potential negative stereotype of pregnant athletes, within a larger search for health and policy variables affecting intercollegiate student-athlete pregnancy and parenting. Ever since the situation seemed scientifically unlikely, an initial internet search was conducted in 2006 using the key words “athlete”, “doping” and “pregnancy doping” to determine the frequency of nonscientific resources (websites, blogs, media reports and anecdotal stories) and examine their content. As a result, the first search showed a surprising number of personal descriptions, citations and attributions of statements to individuals identified as scientists, so a second internet search was conducted [2].

Then, the second internet search used the keywords “abortion doping”, “athlete”, “blood doping”, “college student athlete”, “doping”, “doping policy”, “exercise”, “pregnant”, “pregnancy”, “pregnancy doping” and the names of specific scientists mentioned. The second search was conducted for the purpose of establishing a chronological timeline for the proliferation of the phenomenon, examining the credentials of scientists cited, examining scientific citations, and examining regulatory statements and other policy guidelines. Further searches targeted “human chorionic gonadotropin”, “HCG”, and “testosterone”. Literature from maternal-child nursing, obstetrical medicine, sports medicine, and sports regulatory bodies were examined. Also, the internet and academic search strategies were repeated four times per year through 2009 to detect new resources [2].

Firstly, internet resources have been considered scientifically least credible yet have been important in establishing the frequency and chronology of the phenomenon and assessing lay beliefs about abortion doping. All academic resources have been examined to distinguish primary from secondary research sources and retained for critique. Primary sources within the past 10 years have been considered transparent. Internet resources including websites, blogs, media accounts, and personal anecdotes have been taken for analysis if an author and date could be clearly ascertained. Special care has been taken to retain an open scientific perspective about the potential for truth in the phenomenon, in other words, to accept the descriptions in scientific and popular literature without immediate prejudice or judgment as to their merit. The literature sources on pregnancy/abortion doping have been analyzed to get evidence of boosted performance enhancement and competitive advantage, and to extract themes.

Result

Abortion doping can be defined as the misuse of pregnancy and/or abortion by a female athlete, her coach or support person to artificially induce physiologic advantage, increase red blood cell mass, enhance the delivery of oxygen and boost athletic performance. The definition of pregnancy/abortion doping and consequences for this form of doping would effect anyone who assists, encourages, aids, abets, or covers up pregnancy and/or

abortion. A frequently cited source on pregnancy and abortion doping was Dr. Paul-Erik Paulev, a Danish professor of physiology at the University of Copenhagen cites as: Pregnancy seems to increase muscle strength in female athletes. Female top athletes—just following the period where they gave birth to their first child—have set world records.

Of course, this is acceptable as a natural and unintended event. However, in some countries female athletes have become pregnant for 2-3 months, in order to improve their performance just following an abortion [2]. However, Dr. Paulev’s statements were not taken by any scientific studies, and repeated attempts to contact him personally have been unsuccessful. It is possible that Drs. Erkkola and Paulev never intended for their statements to have such great impact. Passignano and Crutcher (2002) cited Dr. Erkkola as support for the statements that “getting pregnant to abort as a way to improve athletic performance is not current. It is obvious [pregnancy] increases the volume of oxygen and nutrients in doped blood. Pregnancy dopes your blood”. The Life Issues Institute (2002) cited Erkkola, Paulev, and Passignano and Crutcher as support for the statements, “recovering from abortion takes a few days, then [the athlete is] left with the enhanced muscle mass and blood capacity that was meant to carry her through her pregnancy” [2].

Also, McGovern (2002), a journalist, cited Passignano and Crutcher as support for the statements, “early pregnancy boosts a woman’s blood volume tremendously. To have a pregnancy of 2-3 months before an event and having an abortion days prior [gives] as much as 10% enhancement”. Operation Rescue West (2002a) published a news release stating: With the scope of these claims, female Olympians routinely get pregnant 2-3 months prior to competition to get an edge over the competition. Actually, the pregnancy changes a woman’s physiology causing a strengthening of the muscle tissue and an extra ‘boost’ of oxygen to the athlete’s blood giving lots of energy. Then only two weeks before competition, the baby is killed by abortion but the physical benefits linger, increasing the athlete’s ability to perform. This process is known as ‘blood doping’. What is more, women around the world repeat this cycle of pregnancy and abortion in order to further their careers. Olympic ‘heroines’ are routinely built on the bloody foundation of the aborted bodies of their own pre-born sons and daughters [2].

Epstein [3] reported in a Sports Illustrated article that “Doctors now speculate that pregnancy may be a performance enhancer. There is evidence that pregnancy can help an athlete. One change in a pregnant woman’s body is increased blood volume (because two people are being supplied). Once the baby is born, the extra red blood cells that remain in the mother’s system carry extra oxygen to the muscles, an effect akin to doping with EPO”[4]. To sum up, the issue of pregnancy/abortion doping has been reported in the popular literature over the past 20 years and as recently as 2008. Both early and recent descriptions of the phenomenon have referred to “scientists”, “doctors” or “medical” statements as support for the possibility of the statement. These citations need critical examination.

Discussion

The persistence of the notion that pregnancy and/or abortion can be used by female athletes to improve athletic performance is a barrier to healthy female athlete. The myth seems to have originated within early scientific statements (e.g., Erkkola, Paulev) which have now been searched by current science. Popular literature as recently as 2008 continues to analyze the myth and inaccurately portray pregnancy and abortion [5]. Briefly, analysis of the scientific and popular literature on doping, blood doping, pregnancy and athletics revealed that the proposition that a female athlete can gain competitive advantage from pregnancy or abortion is unsupported by current science. Indeed, the two most consistent themes of purported oxygenation and hormonal advantage were carefully analyzed against current science and compared with existing definitions of doping and blood doping. Minor themes

in the literature included the timing of pregnancy or pregnancy termination and ethical issues. Even though pregnancy timing had no basis in science, ethical problems are still being consistently apparent in most of the literature [6,7].

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