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Health Ethics Paper

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Fitness in general, is the ability of the body to respond to the physical demands placed upon it. It is closely related to good health, which means having sufficient energy and vitality to accomplish daily living tasks and leisure-time physical activities without undue fatigue (Teague, Mackenzie, Rosenthal). There are a couple different types of fitness, aerobic and anaerobic. Aerobic fitness would assess the ability of the cardiovascular system, while anaerobic fitness would assess the ability to do resistance training or weight lifting. Both types of fitness are important and in order to be healthy, one must be aerobically fit and anaerobically fit. Of those that do exercise and that are considered anaerobically fit, about 1 million, or .5% of the population, have admitted to using anabolic steroids (Doping). Steroids are a harm to the body and should be considered cheating when used in competition, and should not be used in any case.

Historically, steroids are on the decline. They became popularized when baseball players began to use them back in the 90’s, but have since become less used (Anabolic Steroid Abuse). Now, that doesn’t mean that they aren’t used at all, but they’re just used less. Every once in a while, you may hear about a baseball player being busted for anabolic steroids, human growth hormone, or something of the sort, all of which are illegal in baseball. Anabolic steroids are even illegal for civilians. That is one of the reasons why the current culture around steroids is more secrecy than pride. Nowadays many people, especially those that work hard and get fit the right way, will judge those few that decide to use steroids.

When you look around the fitness world, especially within the body building community, you see people of all shapes and sizes, for the most part large and muscular. Most of the people you’d see are built naturally, with hard work and dedication. But occasionally there are people that haven’t earned their body. Those are the people that use steroids. Steroids, more specifically anabolic steroids, are a drug that can be taken by the mouth or through injection. This drug helps the user build muscle faster and with less work than someone who doesn’t use steroids. Steroids are essentially supplemental testosterone. Testosterone is important to the male body, but too much of it can cause some nasty side effects. While faster progress with less work may sound appealing, the side effects of steroids greatly outweigh the positives. Steroids do in fact cause a male user’s testicles to shrink and they stay shrunk even after the stoppage of use. Steroids can also lead to a reduction in high density lipoprotein or HDL, which is the good cholesterol. This can lead to an increased risk of heart disease or heart attack (Anabolic Steroids and Sports). All of these side effects sound bad, but it all boils down to the user. If they want so badly to be able to show off their muscles but don’t have the time or are too lazy, then steroids are probably what they will do. If they are more concerned with how they look than how they feel or how healthy they are, then steroids are the easy choice.

To those select few, about 1 million, they see the advantages of steroids outweigh the detriments. As stated before, some people don’t think they have the time or, more likely, don’t have the drive to work hard enough to attain their anaerobic fitness goal by themselves. Instead they choose to take steroids to help make this process easier. Steroids can help build muscle faster. So instead of working out for multiple months to obtain the muscle tone or definition they’re looking for, they can work hard for a month or two and have that muscle. Steroids can also be used to decrease the amount of time needed for muscles to repair muscles faster after a hard work out. This would be helpful for athletes that need to meet the demand of tough work outs followed by a practice or other work out of some type, for example football (Anabolic Steroids, ESPN). Football athletes are expected to do resistance training as well as full contact practice sometimes in the same day. Not only can the resistance training lead to soreness, but the practice itself can lead to even more soreness. The usage of steroids in this scenario would allow the athlete to go through with these intense days of training and still wake up feeling good and fresh the next day. In the case of most baseball players, steroids are used to gain an advantage over the competition. Many times, players that use steroids stand out from the rest of the crowd because they hit homeruns farther and more frequently. Not to mention, they get on base more often because when they aren’t hitting homeruns, they still hit the ball harder than the average hitter (Steroids in Sports). In all of these situations, it would be reasonable to see how someone could consider steroids to be a very real option.

Although steroids seem like a liable option for athletes to prevent soreness and injury, they are banned and I believe they should remain banned. If steroids were allowed, the human element of the game, whether it is football, baseball, golf, or whatever, the athlete doesn’t need to be as talented as they would without steroids. The integrity of the game would be tarnished. In football, the athletes that used steroids would not have to dedicate themselves as much. In baseball, less talented players could make their way to the top just on power hitting alone. They wouldn’t be required to be able to play the field, especially with the designated hitter position in the American League. Pitchers would be able to throw harder and batters would hit less often. In my opinion, baseball is boring as it is now, so making hits rarer could only make it worse.

If it wasn’t already clear, I am completely against the usage of steroids. I think that they can ruin your body internally. They are a mechanism used for cheating and I believe that to be wrong. In the fitness realm, many people are proud of their bodies and the work that they put in to get to where they are. The people that use steroids are lazy and unwilling to put in the work it takes to be muscular. The same applies for sport. Those that use steroids are either lazy or scared that they aren’t good enough and instead of putting in the proper work necessary, they cheat their way out of it. An example of this is Barry Bonds. He had a terrific career early on, but as he aged he became worried that he wasn’t good enough. This lead him to turn to the usage of steroids. Mark McGuire is a little bit of a different story. His career was based off of steroid usage, he never had a ‘before steroids’ career (The Steroids Era). When it comes to the records set by players like these, I believe that there should be an asterisk next to their name in order to distinguish them from the players that played the game the correct way. That’s at the professional level. In youth leagues, steroids can lead to even more negative effects. The increased amount of testosterone, which is basically what steroids are, can influence a child into entering puberty earlier than they should. This can lead to more complications down the road when the children reach the usual puberty age (Doping). At the collegiate level, steroids still can have a harmful effect on the body and brain depending on what age because the body continues to develop until the early 20s (Letter from the Director). Even when older athletes use steroids there can be side effects due to the testosterone. When Barry Bonds used steroids late in his career, his hands and head grew in size due to the testosterone, which is one telltale sign of steroid usage (Barry Bonds: steroids Timeline).

In conclusion, fitness is an important part of many people’s everyday lives. They exercise to stay fit and look good, and that is important to them. It’s good to be fit because to be fit is to be healthy. It becomes unhealthy when people either overwork their bodies and put too much strain or when people use steroids, which, as stated among this paper earlier, is harmful in a multitude of ways that may be irreversible. In sports, steroids are a lazy way to get around the hard work. In body building, steroids are also a lazy way to get around hard work, as well as a way to make muscles grow exponentially and lift more weight more consistently. In both cases, steroids are a plague that should not be allowed in sports and should remain illegal for any type of usage not prescribed by a doctor.

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