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Relationship between sports activity, smoking and alcohol and marijuana abuse in elementary school children in Slovenia

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Abstract

Prevention is the most effective remedy against drug abuse. On the one hand, physical activity triggers a series of factors which compel us to adopt healthy dietary behaviours and, on the other, it constitutes drug abuse prevention, as it is itself a kind of body and mind stimulant. The research at hand aims at establishing the degree of familiarity with and abuse of narcotic drugs (such as, for instance, cigarettes, alcohol and marijuana) in pupils in relation to the frequency of their engagement in sports activities. The sample comprised 748 children, 194 male and 189 female fourth graders (with an average age of 10 years \pm 5 months) and 201 male and 164 female seventh graders (with an average age of 13 years \pm 4 months). The indicated data were obtained within the framework of the project "Physical/sports activity for health" carried out by the Institute for Kinesiology Research at the Science and Research Centre of Koper, University of Primorska, Slovenia. We have applied the IPAQ survey instrument (International Physical Activity Questionnaire), which we had tailored somewhat to the age and specific features of respondents. For the purposes of establishing the relationship between non numeric variables, we have applied correspondence analysis. For numeric variables, we have applied the analysis of variance and the independent samples t-test. All hypotheses were verified at the 5% statistical risk level ($p = 0.05$). The results attested to a statistically significant relationship between sports activity, smoking and alcohol and marijuana abuse in pupils. The fact is that the drug abuse problem cannot be remedied in its entirety, but we could, however, alleviate it substantially. One of the most relevant factors in decreasing drug abuse is therefore also the engagement of youth in appropriate sports activities (during leisure time, in particular), which should be directed and planned accordingly by parents and teachers.

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