



Strasbourg, Paris, Montréal, 26 June 2012

International conference on: The Pharmaceutical Industry and the Fight Against Doping: New Partnerships for Clean Sport

co-organised by
Ministry of Sports, Youth, Non Formal Education
and Voluntary Organisations of France
Council of Europe
UNESCO
World Anti-Doping Agency

12 November 2012
9:00-10:00 (welcoming of participants)
10:00-13:00
15:00-18:00

Conseil économique, social et environnemental,
Palais d'Iéna, 9 Place d'Iéna, 75016, Paris (FRANCE)

Background document

Introduction

The public perception of the fight against doping all too often extends no further than the analysis of substances found in athletes' samples and the suspensions imposed in consequence. A few controversial aspects of the battle between athletes who take drugs and the anti-doping authorities feature in the media, where they are often dealt with in emotional terms, with the focus on blood tests, the constraints associated with the taking of urine samples, or the arguments arising from the whereabouts requirements to which athletes are subjected.

Sometimes the fight against doping is summed up in terms of measures regarded as expensive and difficult to put into practice, and results which may appear to be limited. Voices are heard complaining that the fight has failed, or even calling for doping to be legalised.

It is a mistake to reduce the fight against present-day doping to the few aspects which the media or the public focus on. This view is important but it needs to be broadened to include its various and modern dimensions which are, it has to be said, not all immediately obvious to comprehend.

It should not be forgotten that the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) was set up in 1999 to implement the shared will of governments and the international sport movement to fight what is considered to be the main scourge of modern sport. The drawing up of common rules in the World Anti-Doping Code, which has been adopted by 170 countries and almost 700 sports organisations, demonstrates an unprecedented international harmonisation of efforts to combat doping.

WADA's role is not just to draw up regulations and reference documents, accredit laboratories and take action against those who break the rules, be they athletes or sports organisations, but also to support all prevention, awareness-raising and educational initiatives. Social science research is also vital, enabling identification of the circumstances that lead to doping amongst athletes.

The numerous partnerships which WADA has forged with key stakeholders play a significant part in making the fight against doping more effective. The formalisation of a co-operation agreement with INTERPOL, and the memorandum of understanding with the World Customs Organisation, to name but two examples, already make it easier to identify and thwart the methods used by fraudsters and smugglers to supply doping substances. Intelligence and the sharing of information will continue to take an enhanced role in WADA's efforts to protect the rights of clean athletes.

WADA relies on its partners, especially governmental bodies, working in a spirit of intergovernmental co-operation, to draft and ratify international treaties identifying practical measures that can be taken in support of its role. Ongoing efforts by the European Union, for instance, have enabled a raft of Community measures that are binding on all its member states.

The crux of the problem

One of the most effective means of supporting anti-doping activities is timely access to the information available to athletes who misuse drugs for performance enhancement and their enablers. Always on the lookout for new substances or new methods to improve their performance, athletes who engage in doping practices do not think twice about the risks they take to gain access to and misuse substances under development.

The short interval between WADA's awareness of a potential new doping substance and its availability to athletes can curb the agency's capacity to take effective preventive action.

WADA's effectiveness in addressing each new doping challenge is, however, substantially enhanced when the lead time is increased by early information exchange about such risks with those involved in the development of new pharmaceutical substances. This allows WADA to plan and implement appropriate detection strategies in time to catch the drug cheats.

Pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies are obviously in the front line of such communication efforts as they are in the best position to assess the possible doping effects of pipeline substances. Also among the relevant stakeholders are the responsible regulatory agencies, especially when they authorise the marketing of such new substances. In this respect they are at the heart of a vigilance system which could appropriately plug any gaps which appear in co-operation between the pharmaceutical companies and WADA.

Co-operation with the pharmaceutical industry: an obligation or teamwork?

Co-operation of this kind is not a new idea, and WADA has already started practical implementation measures. A bilateral framework agreement on co-operation has been signed with the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Associations (IFPMA) (June 2010). This agreement received the support of the U.S. Biotechnology Industry Organisation (BIO) in July 2011. Bilateral co-operation agreements are also in place with global industry leaders F. Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd (December 2010) and GlaxoSmithKline (June 2011).

The trend is very promising. However, such a system of co-operation will be more effective if it is as broadly based as possible. The widening of this base is a major challenge, and its achievement may be considered from a variety of angles.

One route would be for public authorities to adopt regulations that will establish a binding regulatory approach. Finalising such rules and getting them adopted is a long and complex process which requires developing a harmonised framework applicable across jurisdictions.

Another approach is the conclusion of voluntary co-operation agreements between WADA and individual pharmaceutical companies. For the latter, the negotiation of these agreements would avoid the uncertainties associated with the adoption of a binding regulatory framework. It is very clear from the co-operation over the past few years between the pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies and WADA, and from the signature of recent bilateral co-operation agreements, that such voluntary co-operation is possible. It remains for it to be developed on a wide international scale.

It should be emphasised that such co-operation agreements are not a one-way street: pharmaceutical companies benefit from access to WADA expertise and support, in devising effective measures to address the risk stemming from potential misuse of their products for doping purposes and also gain recognition by government authorities and the public that they are exercising appropriate responsibility to ensure that their products are used solely for therapeutic purposes.

The reasons for holding an international conference

The success achieved with the conclusion of the bilateral co-operation agreements between F. Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd and GlaxoSmithKline and WADA clearly indicates that it is possible for a consensus to emerge, centring on co-operation, rather than a binding regulatory approach as a means of strengthening measures against doping.

It is now time to take these initial co-operation agreements as examples and to engage in as wide and as open a debate as possible on the implications and methods of generalising them.

Objectives of the conference and how to achieve them

The initial aim is to establish basis of the need, expediency and benefits of the co-operation between WADA and the pharmaceutical industry. This will be determined on the basis of experience to date of determining factors and strengths of existing co-operation agreements, as well as review of theoretical and practical issues.

Once the conceptual basis has been agreed, a second aim will be to agree on concrete measures for moving from intent to realisation in practice, focusing especially on broadening the application of the existing framework of relations between the pharmaceutical industry, the anti-doping authorities and WADA in particular. This will include approaches for raising awareness worldwide among companies not currently

involved, but potentially concerned, and decisions on communication and co-ordination measures to support the process as a whole.

The structure of the conference will be guided by these objectives.

The first session will be attended by senior representatives of the various organisations concerned, from WADA and other anti-doping authorities to public authorities, the sports movement and the pharmaceutical industry. They will put forward the viewpoint of the bodies which they are representing.

The second session will be attended by operational experts representing the different sectors concerned. The aim will be, at two round table meetings, to prepare the basis for a roadmap for future action. A press conference will be held at the end of the day.

For further information:

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