

Prevalence and factors associated with self-medication practice among amateur runners

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Introduction: The term “self-medication” refers to the consumption of drugs or dietary supplements, such as vitamins or minerals, without any physician’s advice. The reasons for taking self-medication products are often pains, tiredness and injuries especially among athletes who might also use these products to improve their physical performance. The objective of this study was to assess the prevalence of self-medication and its associated factors among amateur runners through a cross-sectional study.

Material and methods: Our sample was comprised of individuals who took part in various amateur running events. Data regarding self-medication behaviors (i.e., use of drugs, vitamin and/or mineral supplements) exclusively aiming at being better prepared for the race was collected through an anonymous self-questionnaire.

Results: Out of the 358 amateur athletes included in this survey, 31.3% reported having taken self-medication drugs during the period immediately preceding the running with the aim to be physically prepared for the event. Moreover, the week before the running event, more than one third of the runners (34.6%) declared having taken self-medication dietary supplements. Furthermore, 6.1% of the subjects stated having consumed a potentially doping substance. After adjustments for potential confounding variables, the probability to use self-medication products increased significantly with the number of weekly hours of sports practice, the length of the race and the membership to a sports club.

Conclusion: Our study showed that self-medication among amateur athletes is an attested and widespread behavior, where the intensity of the sports practice and athletes’ social network seem to influence the decision to self-medicate.