

# WADA's list – a bitter pill to swallow



By

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# The purpose of my presentation:

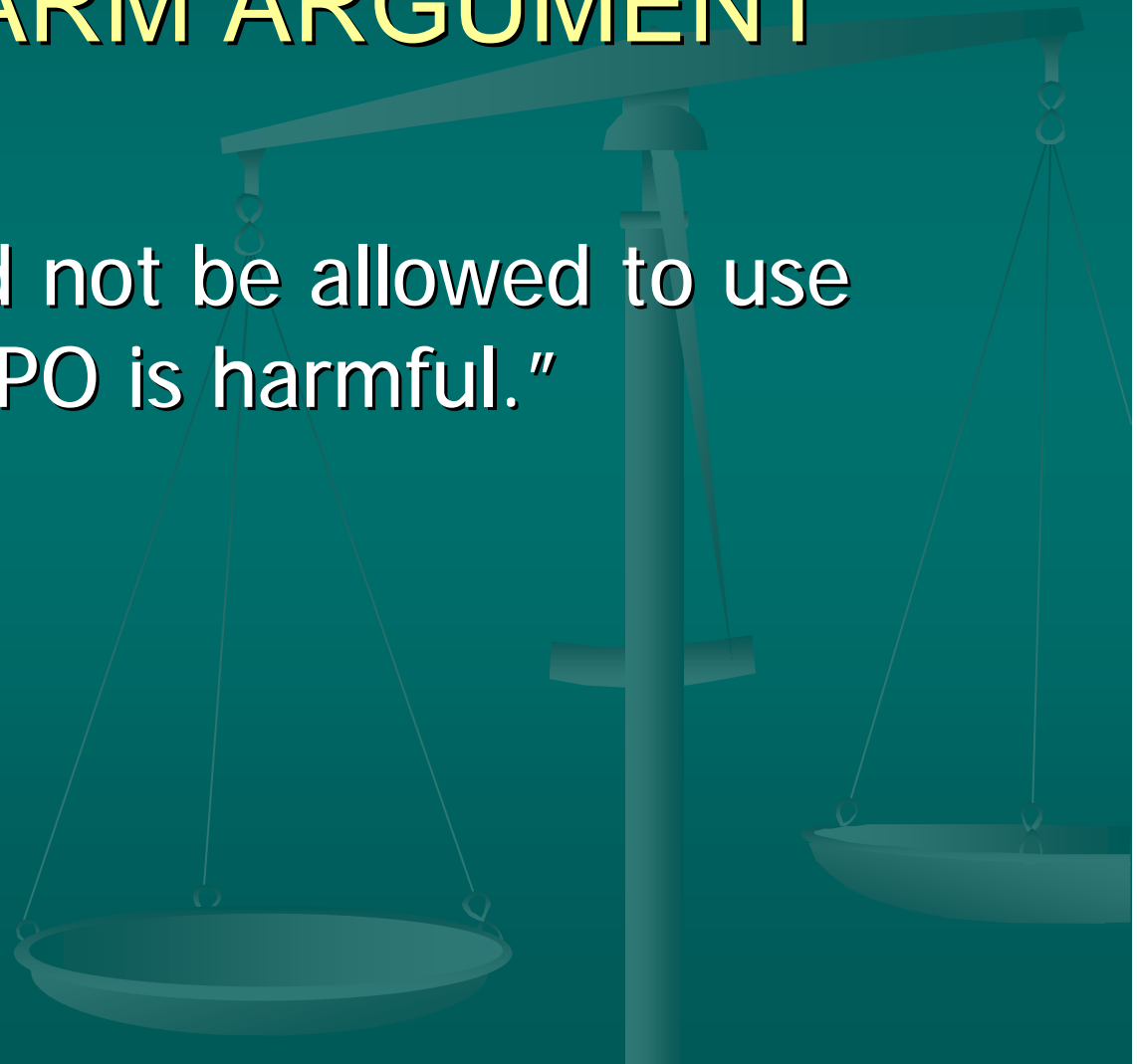
- n A critical evaluation of WADA's prohibited list. I will argue that *some* of the substances and methods on WADA's list should be removed from the list.

For instance: beta blockers, EPO (erythropoietin) or intravenous infusions.

# Arguments in favour of having EPO *on the list*

## 1. THE HARM ARGUMENT

- n "Athletes should not be allowed to use EPO, because EPO is harmful."



# Challenges to the argument from harm

- n Few would accept an obvious implication of this kind of reasoning, i.d. that *nor* should we allow harmful sports such as American football, boxing, cycling (e.g. Tour de France), Formula 1 racing and soccer.
- n The proper administration of EPO might not harm athletes. It depends on the amount, the quality of the substance, and the supervision of intake.

# Further challenges to the argument from harm

- n There is little scientific evidence that limited EPO use, given and monitored by doctors, is dangerous to health.
- n The prohibition of EPO may in fact harm athletes. The current climate encourages use of illegal and undetectable drugs, with little concern for safety. Permitted EPO use would mean less drug use behind closed doors and fewer backstreet doctors and athletic daredevils; the deaths of further athletes may be prevented.

# Arguments in favour of having EPO *on* the list

## 2. THE ROLE MODEL ARGUMENT

- n "Athletes are role models. Allowing them to use EPO, will encourage young people to use EPO (or other drugs) Therefore athletes should not be allowed to use EPO."

# Challenges

- n This is pure speculation. Young people do not always do as their role models do: e.g. they do not train as much as a professional athlete, or live as healthily
- n We do not forbid parents, who are the most important role models for young people, to smoke or drink alcohol. So why forbid athletes to use medicine within safe limits?
- n If EPO can be used safely – the alleged encouragement is not problematic.
- n We accept bad role models in sport for youngsters.

# Arguments in favour of having EPO *on* the list

## 3. THE CHEATING ARGUMENT

- n "Any use of drugs is cheating. It is against the rules"
- n Of course! But these are the current rules: we can question such rules - as we often do within sport. We can decide which drugs we want to be legal.

# Arguments in favour of having EPO *on the list*

## 4. THE SPIRIT OF SPORT ARGUMENT

- n "The use of performance enhancement drugs are against the nature (or spirit) of sport"

# Challenges:

- n The “spirit of sport” is extremely vague. One could just as well say that it is in the nature of sport to use creative means to improve, whether by training methods, diet or medicine.
- n We allow performance enhancement drugs for healthy non-athletes: e.g. Viagra and certain hormones for post-menopausal women.
- n Some performance enhancement substances and methods are not on the WADA list: e.g. caffeine and high-altitudes chambers.

# Arguments in favour of *removing* EPO from the list

## 1. THE AUTONOMY ARGUMENT

- n “We should respect the autonomy of athletes to take EPO.”



# Challenges:

- n Are athletes autonomous? Or are they in effect coerced into taking drugs? What about athletes in totalitarian countries?
- n One answer:
- n We accept the use of medicine in sport without questioning the autonomy of the athletes. We accept (and admire!) athletes who dare to take risks.
- n In totalitarian countries everything that can be misused probably will be misused. This should not prevent non-totalitarian countries to use technology that they can benefit from (e.g. TV).

# Arguments in favour of *removing* EPO from the list

## 2. THE INEQUALITY ARGUMENT

- n "The ban on EPO promotes inequality of opportunities among athletes."
- n Status quo concerning the access to increase the number of red blood cells is:
- n Currently, some athletes cheat and use EPO - and some do not.
- n Currently, some athletes are able to train in high-altitude environments – and some are not.
- n If the ban were lifted, all athletes could use EPO without cheating. Because EPO is a cheaper than high-altitude chambers, more athletes (including those in poor countries) would be able to increase their red blood cell counts.

# Conclusions

- n EPO is here to stay: instead of testing for EPO we should focus on health - and not whether EPO enhance performance.
  - n So forget testing for EPO – test instead for haematocrit.
  - n The prohibition of EPO benefits cheaters; removing EPO from the WADA list, and their competitive advantage will disappear.
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