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Nutritional and pharmacological supplementation in dance: antecedents, prevalence and outcomes

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Research in the athletic domain suggests athletes often look to support and facilitate their training and performance using a variety of nutritional, medicinal and illicit performance enhancing substances. Importantly, the inappropriate and/or excessive use of such substances has been linked with potentially serious health consequences. Although in its infancy, research investigating use of these substances in dance populations is starting to emerge. The aim of this symposium is to draw upon research conducted in dance and other athletic domains to generate an evidence-informed awareness of this issue in front-line practitioners working in the field of dance medicine and science. The symposium will consist of three individual presentations. The first will draw upon evidence from qualitative and quantitative research conducted in dance to provide insight on (a) the prevalence of nutritional, medicinal, and performance enhancing substance use in dance, (b) information sources dancers use to gain knowledge on these substances and (c) incitements for and deterrents against their use. The second looks firstly, at the effect of vitamin D deficiency on muscle performance; secondly, injury incidence and the influence of supplementation on these variables; and thirdly, the rapidity that supplementation effects muscle function. The final presentation will provide insight into lifestyle and dietary choices in situations whereby supplementation may be viewed as essential. The symposium will then conclude with a panel discussion stimulated by questions from the audience.