

Request to participate in medical research:

Characteristics and Attitudes Among Gym Members in Zurich Using Anabolic Androgenic Steroids

Dear study participants,

We are asking you here if you would be willing to participate in our research project.

Your participation is voluntary. All data collected in this research project are subject to strict data protection regulations and are completely anonymised.

The research project is being conducted by the Institute of Family Medicine of the University of Zurich in collaboration with Arud (Centre for Addiction Medicine, Zurich) and DIZ (Drug Information Centre, Zurich). If you are interested, we would be pleased to inform you about the results from this research project.

In this letter we explain the most important points to you. If there are any questions about the study, they can be forwarded by e-mail to arud@arud.ch. So that you can already get an idea, here are the most important points in advance. More detailed information will follow.

Why are we conducting this research project?

- Anabolic androgenic steroids (AAS) are the most commonly used muscle-building substances, but in addition to the desired effects, they carry many undesirable side effects, long-term consequences and the risk of addiction. Contaminations of the substances, additional active ingredients or incorrect dosage information expose anabolic steroid users to additional health risks. It is therefore of great importance to be able to provide users with sufficient medical care and support.
- With the present survey we want to determine the characteristics and attitudes of members in Zurich gyms who use anabolic androgenic steroids. The aim is to find out whether AAS users receive medical care and whether there is a need for support services so that in future a care service can be set up for those affected in Switzerland.

What do I have to do when I participate? - What happens to me when I participate?

- Form of participation: If you decide to participate, you only have to fill in a questionnaire.
- Participation procedure: If you participate, we ask you to spend about 15 minutes once to fill in the questionnaire.

What are the benefits and risks involved?

Benefits

- By participating in the survey, you have the opportunity to share your experiences with the use of anabolic steroids. This allows you to seriously reflect on the issue and gives you the opportunity to disclose your experiences in an anonymous way. At the end of the questionnaire, an email address and telephone number will be provided, which you can contact if you have noticed any problems with the use of anabolic steroids. Follow the link

below to go directly to our website for support: <https://arud.ch/en/substanzen-und-abhaengigkeiten/abhaengigkeiten/anabolika>

- Your participation will help future users who need medical support for health problems caused by the use of anabolic steroids, information on questions about use (harm, symptoms, dosage, side effects, interactions, quality of substances), access to clean injection equipment and safe injection practices, or to ensure the quality of the substances used. This is because your participation in this research project is intended to evaluate the need for a care service and thus establish a suitable medical care service in Switzerland.

Risk and burden

- There must be a time commitment to answer the questions.
- Since the questionnaire is completed via the internet, there is a data risk. However, only anonymous data is used, which cannot be traced back to individuals.
- Collected data cannot be traced back to individuals and IP addresses are not recorded, so there is no risk under criminal law. Only people from the research team have access to the data.
- As the study only involves filling out web survey, there is no health risk for the study participants.
- There are no additional costs for you. By law, it is not possible to make money from your data and samples. Therefore, there is no financial benefit for you, the University of Zurich, Arud or the DIZ.

By participating in the survey, you attest that you are participating voluntarily and that you understand the contents of the entire document.

Detailed information

1. Aim and selection

We refer to our research proposal in this handout as a research project. If you participate in this research project, you are a participant.

In this research project we want to explore the characteristics and attitudes of members in Zurich gyms who use anabolic androgenic steroids. We want to investigate whether users are receiving medical care and whether there is a need for support services so that in the future a care service can be set up for those affected in Switzerland. We are asking you to participate because all persons who train in gyms in the canton of Zurich and who use or have used anabolic androgenic steroids are eligible to participate.

2. General information

- The use of anabolic steroids and other performance-enhancing substances has been little studied in Switzerland. Literature shows that their use to enhance athletic performance and improve appearance is gaining popularity. Anabolic steroids are no longer limited to professional sports, but are increasingly used in recreational sports. Their use poses serious risks for users as well as the danger of developing dependence.
- We would therefore like to find out what characteristics users of anabolic steroids have, what the motivation behind use is, what substances are taken, where the substances are acquired, how they are used, whether additional illegal substances are taken, whether substances are injected, whether there are concerns about the use of anabolic steroids, how the quality of the substances is assessed, what the attitude towards medical professionals is and whether there is a need for support services.
- If you participate, you will have the option to seek medical help if needed via an email address or phone number at the end of the questionnaire or use the following link to go directly to our website: <https://arud.ch/en/substanzen-und-abhangigkeiten/abhangigkeiten/anabolika>.
- The results will inform future research in this area, and will be used to develop a support service for this growing population.
- Data collection for the research project is planned from June to September 2023. This is a cantonal study, which is limited to the canton of Zurich.
- We are doing this research project as required by the laws in Switzerland. We are also following all internationally recognised guidelines. The responsible ethics committee has reviewed the research project.

3. Procedure

The participation in the survey is only once. The questionnaire can be completed online from any location. You are therefore requested to fill in the questionnaire carefully and truthfully once. It is expected to take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

4. Benefits

If you participate in this research project, you have the opportunity to disclose the use of anabolic steroids or other performance-enhancing substances in an anonymous way. Therefore, you have the opportunity to seriously reflect on the issue. At the end of the questionnaire, an email address and telephone number will be listed, which you can contact for help if needed.

In addition, this research project aims to establish an optimised care offer for people suffering from anabolic steroid use in the future, from which you may also be able to benefit. To be able to record the exact needs of those affected, we need your cooperation.

5. Voluntariness and obligations

You are participating voluntarily. If you participate in this research project, you are asked to follow the guidelines and requirements of the research project, in particular to complete the questionnaire carefully and truthfully.

6. Risks and burdens

The research project does not expose you to any health risks. No medical interventions will be carried out. There is no risk of being prosecuted. Only people from the research team have access to the data. There are no additional costs for you.

However, there are the following risks and burdens to consider with this research project:

- Data risk: as this is an web-based survey, there is a data risk. However, only anonymous data is collected, which cannot be traced back to individuals. IP addresses are not recorded.
- Burdens: A time effort has to be made to answer the questions.

7. Results

There will be objective final results of the whole research project. If you are interested, a summary of the overall results will be sent to you at the end of the research project. For this, please contact arud@arud.ch.

8. Confidentiality of data and samples

8.1 Data processing and encryption

Personal and health data will be collected for this research project. During data collection, your data will be collected anonymously. No reference data (name, date of birth, address, etc.) will be collected. Only members of the research team have access to the data collected, but they cannot draw any conclusions about the individual.

8.2 Data protection

All data protection requirements are strictly followed. It is possible that your data may need to be transmitted in encrypted form, for example for publication in a scientific journal, and may be made available to other researchers.

8.3 Data protection in case of further use

Your data could be important for answering other questions at a later date and could later be sent and used to another database in Switzerland or abroad for analyses not yet defined in more detail. This other database must comply with the same standards as the database for this project.

8.4 Inspection rights during controls

This research project may be reviewed by the responsible ethics committee and by the project leader. The research team must then disclose your anonymous data for such checks. All must maintain absolute confidentiality.

9 Remuneration

If you participate in this research project, you will not receive any remuneration for doing so. No costs are caused to you or your health insurance company as a result of your participation. It is excluded by law to make money from your data and samples. Therefore, neither you nor the University of Zurich, Arud or the DIZ will benefit financially.

10 Liability

If you suffer any damage as a result of the research project, the institution that initiated the research project and is responsible for its implementation is liable. The requirements and the procedure are regulated by law. If you have suffered damage, please contact us directly.

11 Funding

The research project is paid for entirely by Arud.

12 Contact person(s)

You may ask questions regarding the participation in the project at any time. Also, if you have any uncertainties that arise during the research project or afterwards, please contact: arud@arud.ch.

Declaration of consent

Declaration of consent to participate in a research project

Please read this form carefully. Please contact arud@arud.ch if there is anything you do not understand or would like to know. Written consent is not required for participation.

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| BASEC-number (after submission): | Req-2023-00322 |
| Title of the research project (scientific and lay language): | Characteristics and Attitudes Among Gym Members in Zurich Using Anabolic Androgenic Steroids |
| Responsible institution (Project leader with address): | Arud Centre for Addiction Medicine Schützengasse 31 8001 Zürich |
| Place of implementation: | Internet (REDCap) |
| Head of the research project at the study location: Surname and first name in block capitals | Kruijver Muriel |

By completing the survey, you agree to the following:

- I have been informed in writing with this study information about the purpose, the procedure of the research project, about possible advantages and disadvantages as well as possible risks.
- I am taking part in this research project voluntarily and accept the content of the written information given about the above-mentioned research project. I have had sufficient time to make my decision.
- Any questions in connection with participation in this research project have been answered for me.
- I agree that the responsible professionals of the project and the ethics committee in charge of this research project may inspect my data for testing and control purposes, but in strict compliance with confidentiality.
- I know that my health-related and personal data can only be passed on in anonymised form for research purposes for this research project (also abroad). The sponsor guarantees that data protection in accordance with Swiss standards will be observed.