

## 97% of players in the Spanish Football League do not know what substances are banned

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Research news

- **A study conducted by researchers from the University of Granada has also found that 95% of footballers do not even know what this agency is for.**
- **The researchers analysed a sample of 1,324 footballers from 88 different teams, including 304 players from the Professional Football League.**

The vast majority (97.4%) of players in the Spanish League are unfamiliar with the list of substances banned by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). Furthermore, 95% do not even know what this agency is for.



These are among the findings of a study carried out by Jaime Morente, Thomas Zandonai, and Mikel Zabala, researchers from the Faculty of Sport Sciences of the University of Granada (UGR). A paper on the study was recently published in the prestigious international Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport.

The researchers studied and compared the attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge of footballers in the Spanish League regarding the use of banned drugs—doping—in the sport. They analysed a sample comprising 1,324 football players from 88 different teams, including 304 participants from the Professional Football League.

“If we look at the specialized scientific literature, although there are studies dealing with other sports, this is an unprecedented piece of research at a national and international level, due to the difficulty of accessing this type of sample and, of course, the taboo nature of the soccer-doping binary,” explain the UGR researchers.

## The “false consensus” effect

Some 5% of the footballers who participated in the study acknowledged having used banned substances at some time during their sports career, while 23.7% of the participants knew their peers were resorting to this type of substance. This phenomenon is known in the scientific literature as the false-consensus effect: the participant claims not to be a consumer of the substance, but curiously does know consumers in their environment.

The researchers conclude that “there is a significant lack of knowledge regarding doping among the players we evaluated.” Doping is a complex phenomenon involving medical, ethical, pharmacological, and educational factors, among others, which therefore must be tackled by means of a multidisciplinary strategy. In short, although anti-doping controls are necessary, the researchers propose a prevention-based approach, in which educational programmes are delivered even at an early age, as a way to eradicate this scourge.

## Bibliography:

Morente-Sánchez, J., Zandonai, T., Zabala, M. (2019). “Attitudes, beliefs and knowledge related to doping in different categories of football players.” *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsams.2019.05.010>

## Image caption:



*Two of the authors of this work, UGR researchers Mikel Zabala and Jaime Morente.*

## Jaime Morente Sánchez

Department of Physical Education and Sports, UGR

Tel.: +34 958 244 386

<http://www.ugr.es/en>

Email: [jaimemorente@ugr.es](mailto:jaimemorente@ugr.es)

**Mikel Zabala Díaz**

Department of Physical Education and Sports, UGR

Tel.: +34 958 244 381

Email: [mikelz@ugr.es](mailto:mikelz@ugr.es)