Doping in sport has been, and continues to be, a colossal problem. With anti-doping authorities around the world trying to eradicate the use of performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) in sport, there is a primary emphasis on detection-based deterrence activities (Backhouse, Patterson and McKenna, 2012) but, with limited resources, the importance and impact of education programs seems to lack the needed focus. Of the World Anti-Doping Agency’s (WADA) anti-doping toolkit, only three of the 158-page document discusses “education and prevention whereas the rest (98%) focuses on the detection-based system” (Dimeo & Moller, 2018). Moreover, as an example of this, Houlihan (2008, p.61) states that UKAD, the United Kingdom Anti-Doping Agency, “devotes the bulk of anti-doping resources to the deterrence, apprehension and sanction of violators of anti-doping regulations rather than education”. Much of the extant literature in this field suggests that national and international anti-doping agencies adopt a more reactive strategy in dealing with doping in sport. Somerville and Lewis (2005, p. 516) suggest that the education strategies of WADA (and, subsequently, of NADOs) need to be “altered to encourage a more proactive approach to doping prevention”. This may be difficult to change at this point given that, as Mazanov, Huybers and Conner (2011, p. 106) argue, “there is no empirical evidence to guide targeting of anti-doping education initiatives” whilst also stating that “career transition points have a potentially significant influence in doping behavior by introducing a set of ‘tipping’ points in an athlete’s career that may create the temptation to dope” (p. 106). These ‘tipping’ points may include entering into a professional contract, returning from a long-term injury or returning from a maternity break.

In being able to identify, firstly, the prevalence of doping activity across all demographics and, secondly, when this behavior is most likely to occur, this research has been designed to profile a cheat. By recording such information as nationality, age at the time of the offence, gender, sport played and substance(s) used, the researchers are able to enhance the understanding as to when athletes may be more likely to use PEDs (based on age), what type of PEDs these athletes are using across different sports, and the gender of these athletes who decide to cheat. Data regarding the length of any sanction has also been gathered. A logistic regression has been run on more than 5,000 cases of failed drugs tests in sport (between 1981 and 2017 – 18 years before and after the introduction of WADA in 1999) to determine the impact these variables have on PED use. By understanding the relationship and the probability of each variable on the use of PEDs, researchers and educators can start to work on methods of prevention instead of detection. In doing so, professionals and educators can identify “at-risk” athletes early to build tools and resources to help those at need.