

IOC Set To Combat Gene Doping

Olympic officials and scientific experts will meet in China to review the progress in developing a test for gene doping, the potential future of [cheating in sports](#).

Researchers have made significant advances in devising a test, leaving officials hopeful a method can be approved soon for use at the Olympics and other events, IOC medical commission chairman Arne Ljungqvist said and added quite some progress has been made in terms of outlining the scientific basis for analysis of gene doping and we are moving and it's promising.

On June 5-6, up to 40 experts from around the world will meet in Beijing to discuss recent findings and how to move forward in combatting the threat of athletes manipulating their genes to boost sports performance. The meeting is being organized by the World Anti-Doping Agency in conjunction with China's national anti-doping agency. It will be the Olympic movement's fourth symposium on gene doping, following previous conferences in Cold Spring Harbor, New York, in 2002; Stockholm in 2005; and St. Petersburg, Russia, in 2008.

Ljungqvist, also a WADA vice president, said there have been scientific studies which are quite promising and we feel it's time to review this within the context of a small symposium of specialists."

[Gene doping](#), which is prohibited by the IOC and WADA, involves transferring genes directly into human cells to blend into an athlete's own DNA to enhance muscle growth and increase strength or endurance. It is an illegal offshoot of gene therapy, which typically alters a person's DNA to fight diseases like muscular dystrophy and cystic fibrosis.

WADA director general David Howman said we want to continue the momentum that we've got so we can get into a scenario where the detection methods can be approved.

In 2010, two groups of scientists - one in Germany and a US-French research team - said they developed gene doping tests in what WADA described at the time as a major breakthrough. One was a blood test that would detect doping as far back as 56 days, while the other was for detecting genetic doping in muscles. However, the tests have not been validated and hopes they could be used at the 2012 London Olympics were not realized.

Ljungqvist said when you have a scientific method, that is one thing, but you need to develop a technique and make good use of it and we have a reasonably good scientific basis and we'll have to discuss how to develop this further now.

The IOC and WADA say there is no evidence that athletes are gene doping, but warn that it may be only a matter of time. We know that those who wish to take a chance and cheat are ready to do anything, Ljungqvist said and also remarked we've had people who are researching into this and they have been approached by coaches and the like. But we don't have any evidence suggesting this is yet in place.

Howman said WADA has received information about people looking on the black market for access to gene doping methods and also remarked that nothing has amounted that is sufficient to be able to put

together a case and we don't discount the fact that people are fiddling around with it and certainly that possibility exists.