

## Easy To Buy Illegal Performance Drugs In Turkey

A study by two university students from Turkey has revealed that it is extremely easy to access illegal performance enhancing drugs in Turkey.

A thesis research conducted by Kevser Çiftçi and Tuğba Köksal, graduate students at [Hacettepe University's School of Sports Sciences and Technology](#), showed that obtaining drugs without prescription was quite easy. The students went to 150 pharmacies in Ankara and asked for erythropoietin (EPO), which is a medicine usually illegal to sell without a medical prescription. They reported that they were able to obtain EPO in 127 pharmacies out of the 150, which were located in three different neighborhoods of Ankara.

EPO, which is usually used to cure kidney problems and anemia, is on the blacklist of the World Anti-Doping Agency and that it could be detected with the biologic passport. Çiftçi said the fact that they asked if we were sportsmen in some of the pharmacies shows that this medicine is used in sporting activities.

In the last few months, doping by Turkish athletes has been prominent with Olympic champion Aslı Çakır Alptekin and European champion Nevin Yanıt facing allegations of doping in April this year. After the allegations, the two were left out of the Turkish squad and also suspended from international competitions. Eight weightlifters were left off the Turkish national squad ahead of the Mediterranean Games, which took place between June 20 and 30 in Turkey's Mersin, after testing positive for doping. The country's problems with doping were accepted by Turkish Athletics Federation (TAF) Chairman Mehmet Terzi who said 24 athletes were suspected of doping this year and added the federation's battle with doping would continue, claiming that doping figures would decrease by September.

Haydar Demirel, a member of the National Olympic Committee of Turkey Anti-Doping Commission and principal of the Hacettepe University School of Sports Sciences and Technology, remarked it was concerning that illegal performance enhancing material could be found easily. Demirel added we know that the age to start using doping has fallen considerably and a youngster can go to the pharmacy and obtain [drugs] if he wishes to try it. He further added that [Alex Schwarzer](#), an Italian athlete who was suspended from his national team before the 2012 London Olympics because of doping, had said he obtained the drugs from Antalya without a prescription.

The 2008 Olympic race walk champion who was expelled from the London Games for doping said he flew alone to Turkey in September with 1,500 euros (now \$1,850) to buy the blood booster EPO at a pharmacy. The athlete while recounting how he hid the banned substance in the home he was sharing with star figure skater Carolina Kostner had remarked he disguised it in a box of vitamins in a refrigerator at Kostner's home in Germany, where he was staying in July. He had added that it was easy to access such drugs in countries like Turkey. Schwarzer was accurate in his statement, according to Demirel.

The illegal sale of EPO was confirmed by Secretary-general of the Turkish Pharmacists' Association Harun Kızılay who added they would investigate into the issue.