

Meldonium Crisis Contributes To 26.4 Per Increase In Doping Cases

Annual report of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has revealed that 26.4 per cent increase in positive doping cases was recorded for 2016 in comparison with similar data for 2015, although this was partly because of the addition of Meldonium as a banned substance.

A total of 4,814 adverse analytical findings (AAFs) were recorded for 2016 in comparison with 3,809 for the previous year. The latter figure included 497 failures for Meldonium, which is a substance only prohibited from January 1, 2016.

A detailed testing report is likely to be published in the fourth quarter of this year.

Tennis superstar [Maria Sharapova](#) and swimmer [Yulia Efimova](#) were among some of the top Russian and Eastern European stars who failed anti-doping tests for Meldonium. Sharapova and many others claimed they were not aware Meldonium was added to the list of banned substances. A big majority of these athletes have now made a return to competition after it was conceded by the World Anti-Doping Agency that "more research was required" to find out how long the substance remains in the human body. WADA was heavily criticized for the ways in which it first banned the substance and then moderated its attitude to the substance.

The World Anti-Doping Agency even made it a point not to directly respond to the criticism it received from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and other sporting bodies for the way it handled the [Russian doping scandal](#). The response of WADA was justified in a joint opening message by its President Sir Craig Reedie and director general Olivier Niggli.

Reedie and Niggli wrote the Russian doping scandal was one of the most destabilizing incidents for sports in recent memory. They also wrote it has taxed the resources of many of our stakeholders; in particular, it was extremely demanding for the World Anti-Doping Agency and International Federations (IFs) many of which are still managing the fallout. It was further added that WADA has been shoulder to shoulder with our partners and also remarked we have been doing our utmost to support them with their results management and to help them determine if there is sufficient evidence to pursue anti-doping rule violations for their athletes or support personnel.

Sir Craig and Niggli concluded the World Anti-Doping Agency for 17 years has led the charge against doping in sport in an ever changing and complex environment. They added we are proud of the work that has been accomplished by the WADA team, with limited resources - always striving to meet and exceed the expectations set by our partners in the clean sport community. It was also added that we believe that we have been successful in our mission and also remarked that our goal is to ensure that the clean athlete prevails.

The WADA Annual report listed 10 priorities for the future that include the development of a stronger code compliance system, including "graded and proportionate" sanctions for non-compliant organizations. The priorities included generating more income and strengthening laboratories and the Athlete Biological Passport (ABP) system and improved education and scientific research.