Australia and the UK are writing the same story on steroid abuse

Steroids have been the #1 most commonly injected drug in Australia for the past 6 years. Even more alarming, is the drive behind steroid use being strongly linked to aesthetics. What does this mean? Australia’s use of steroids highlights major body image concerns nation-wide.

The Guardian Australian Edition, released results yesterday 22nd January, that approximately 1 million people in the UK use steroids for looks, not sport. This is a similar story to what Australians are experiencing. Conversations have been prevalent in the media, but nothing seems to be changing.

Growing research indicates that anabolic-androgenic steroid (AAS) use in Australia is increasingly associated with a drive for masculinity and improved appearance, rather than often presumed enhanced performance. A recent study also found that steroid users show greater body dissatisfaction, eating disorder psychopathology and muscle dysmorphia psychopathology.

Dr Scott Griffiths is a NHMRC research fellow at the University of Melbourne and a leading research expert into male body image, muscle dysmorphia and steroid use in Australia. Dr Griffiths gives insight into why Australian’s are engaging in steroid use and shows concerns around the strong link to body image issues.

“Unlike past today’s steroid users are not athletes. The majority of steroid users in Australia, the UK, and other countries around the world, are motivated by physical appearance. Simply put, contemporary steroid users want to look better, feel more confident, and feel more attractive. Consequently, more users than ever are at risk of developing body image and eating disorders, including anabolic-androgenic steroid dependence and muscle dysmorphia (i.e., ‘reverse anorexia’).”

Butterfly Foundation’s CEO, Christine Morgan shares Dr Griffith’s concerns and urges Australians to have conversations and reach out for support.

“As a nation, we are striving for perfection. A perfection that is not only unrealistic, but dangerous. Steroid use, body dissatisfaction and eating disorders are a serious problem in Australia. We need to address the underlying issues driving extreme measures to change appearance, in order to better support our community. The first step in doing this is to have conversations and encourage our friends and family to seek help.”

Dr Griffiths adds, “Now is the time to pause and reflect on why so many boys and men (not to mention girls and women), feel so pressured to obtain a ‘perfect’ physique. The excessive value and esteem placed on the physical appearance of our young people, be they boys or girls, is a tragedy manifest in rising rates of steroid use and eating disorders, both in Australia and elsewhere.”

Steroid use in Australia is growing, and so too is body dissatisfaction. As we launch into the new year, it’s time we delve deeper into this serious issue and tackle it head on.

Anyone needing support with eating disorders or body image issues is encouraged to contact **Butterfly’s National Helpline on 1800 33 4673 or support@thebutterflyfoundation.org.au**
For urgent support call Lifeline 13 11 14

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Butterfly encourages the media to adhere to the [Mindframe Guidelines for reporting of suicide and eating disorders](#).

**Media Contact:** Danielle Cuthbert  0421 978 940  danielle.cuthbert@thebutterflyfoundation.org.au

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