

Episode: *Author Interview: “Seven Points for Athletes to Consider Before Using a Dietary Supplement”*

Guest: Amy Cadwallader, PhD

Host: Tim Hoff

Transcript by: Cheryl Green

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[bright theme music]

TIM HOFF: Welcome to another episode of the Author Interview series from the *American Medical Association Journal of Ethics*. I'm your host, Tim Hoff. This series provides an alternative format for accessing the interesting and important work being done by Journal contributors each month. Joining me on this episode is Dr Amy Cadwallader, the Director of Regulatory and Public Policy Development for the U.S. Pharmacopeia and the former Director of Science & Drug Policy at the American Medical Association, and Assistant Secretary to the AMA Council on Science & Public Health. She's here to discuss her article, *Seven Points for Athletes to Consider Before Using a Dietary Supplement*, in the May 2022 issue of the Journal, [Underregulated Supplements](#). Dr Cadwallader, thank you so much for being on the podcast with me today. [music fades out]

DR AMY CADWALLADER: It's my pleasure. Thanks for having me.

HOFF: So, to begin with, what is the main ethics point that you're advancing in this article?

CADWALLADER: Athletes are responsible for what they put into their bodies. Regardless of intent or circumstances, if an athlete eats or drink something that has a banned substance in it and later has a positive drug test, they are held responsible even if they didn't know that the banned substance was there.

HOFF: And what do you see as the most important thing for health professions students and trainees to take from this article?

CADWALLADER: It's really important that if or when a health care professional is discussing the use of dietary supplements with an athlete that they're sure to have an honest and risk-based conversation about products. The most common chemically adulterated or dishonestly labeled dietary supplements are those marketed as weight loss, sexual enhancement, or sports supplements. Most athletes, and consumers for that matter, don't have the expertise to interpret a dietary supplement ingredient list. Most people don't know that there are complex scientific synonyms for ingredients they know by a common name and could therefore select a product that has a banned substance without recognizing its name on a label.

HOFF: Hmm.

CADWALLADER: So, professionals should, health practitioners should honestly discuss the risk associated with the use of a dietary supplement product and counsel patients to look for trusted third-party certification or verification of products and well-established companies with no previous issues with product contamination, a good record with the FDA, and a commitment to scientific integrity regarding claims substantiation.

HOFF: And finally, if you could add a point to this article that you didn't have the time or space to fully explore, what would that be?

CADWALLADER: Few dietary supplement products, especially those marketed to athletes, have gone through rigorous scientific testing or clinical trials to show that they produce significant impacts on performance or that they will not have negative health impacts. The risk of using an unknown product is rarely worth any anticipated gains that the product claims. In athletics, hard work, training, and diet are generally the keys to improvement, not a short cut from a product that purports remarkable results. [theme music returns]

HOFF: Dr Cadwallader, thank you so much for being on the podcast and for your contribution to the Journal this month.

CADWALLADER: My pleasure. Thanks for having me.

HOFF: To read the full article, as well as the rest of the May 2022 issue for free, visit our site, [JournalofEthics.org](https://www.journalofethics.org). We'll be back soon with more *Ethics Talk* from the *American Medical Association Journal of Ethics*.