Reviewer's report

Title: Doctors, doping and anti-doping: dark sides of medicine?

Version: 1 Date: 23 October 2006

Reviewer: Julian Savulescu

Reviewer's report:

General
This is a useful contribution to this important issue. It is in the style of a review article, covering most of the weaknesses with the current antidoping dogma.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
The central theme could be made clearer from the outset. What are the main reasons the authors believe are important to relaxing doping controls?
The authors do not adequately address the major objection to doping: that sport should be a test of natural potential. Training and environmental manipulation can be used to bring out natural potential but we should not alter it. Sport is just a test of biological (and psychological) potential.
The authors claim on p 14 that relaxing doping controls would not increase the use of doping - that seems implausible. They state there is "no evidence" to suggest use of performance enhancers would increase but it does seem plausible that use would increase with legalisation, as it has with all prohibitionist policies.
The section on what the physicians' role should be seems tangential to the central theme.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
'I declare that I have no competing interests'