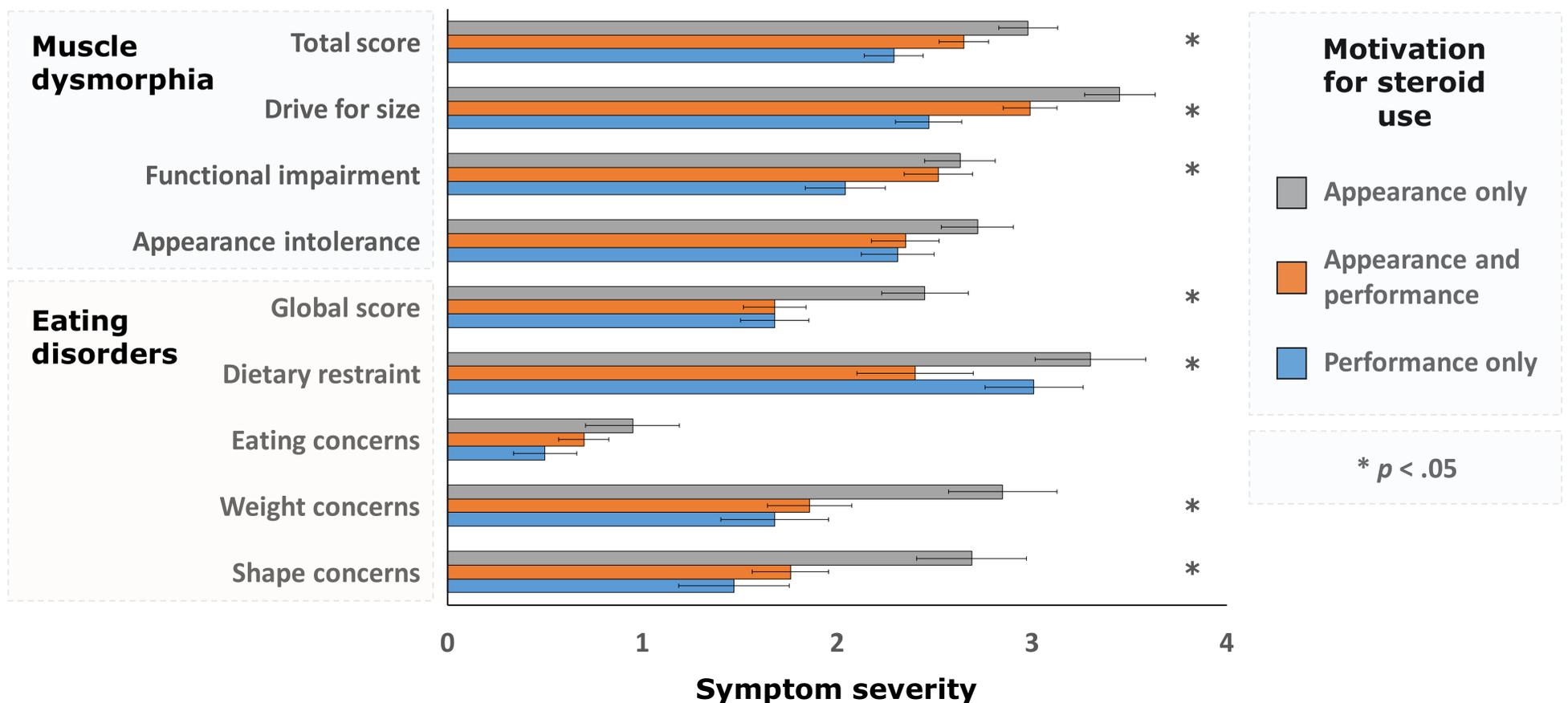


Anabolic steroid use and body image psychopathology in men: Appearance- versus performance-driven motivations

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What's this study about?

Introduction: Steroid use frequently co-occurs with muscle dysmorphia and eating disorders. Differing motivations for steroid use may be related to the likelihood of these disorders developing or otherwise being present

Aim: To determine if muscle dysmorphia and eating disorder pathology are related to steroid users' motivations for steroid use

Hypotheses: Steroid users with appearance motivations would report greater muscle dysmorphia and eating disorder pathology than users with performance motivations

Sample: 122 current steroid users, median since last use = 4 days, median total duration of use = 2 years, 100% male, 84% heterosexual, recruited from either needle exchanges (37%) or gymnasiums (63%) located in the United Kingdom

Measures: Motivation for steroid use measured using a single item with 3 response options: appearance only, appearance and performance, and performance only. Muscle dysmorphia symptoms measured using the Muscle Dysmorphic Disorder Inventory. Eating disorder symptoms measured using the Eating Disorders Examination – Questionnaire

What did you find?

Results: Motivations for steroid use were 50% appearance only, 31% appearance and performance, and 26% performance only

Broad pattern of significant differences in muscle dysmorphia and eating disorder symptoms as a function of motivation for steroid use (see Figure above). Follow-up pairwise comparisons showed that users with appearance only motivations reported more pathology than those with performance only motivations

Discussion: Men who use steroids to improve their appearance are more at risk for muscle dysmorphia and eating disorders than men who use steroids to improve their performance. For healthcare professionals, the simple question "Do you use steroids predominantly to improve your appearance or your performance?" might be useful to gauge the likelihood of co-morbid muscle dysmorphia and eating disorder pathology

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