

Cardiac Risk in the Young (CRY) submission of 2 September 2022

PE1919/G: Ban the sale of high caffeine products to children for performance enhancement

Firstly I would like to clarify that I do not believe I have sufficient expertise to comment specifically about the petition *PE1919: Ban the sale of high caffeine products to children for performance enhancement* as I am not familiar with the products or how they are used by children for sports enhancement.

Every week in the UK 12 fit and healthy young people die suddenly from undiagnosed cardiac conditions. The current European recommendations are that all young people should have cardiac screening (including an ECG) prior to participation in sport. The UK National Screening Committee does not support this position and therefore those young people at risk of potentially life threatening heart conditions are not routinely identified, are unaware they have a heart condition, and are therefore unable to take precautionary action (such as decisions to modify their lifestyle) in order to reduce the chance of suffering a cardiac arrest. 80% of young sudden cardiac deaths occur with no prior symptoms and when symptoms (such as breathlessness, chest pain, passing out, dizziness) do present they are easily dismissed by health professionals.

Currently CRY provides cardiac screening to approximately 30,000 young people age 14-35 each year in the UK. Approximately 10% will be elite athletes where cardiac screening is either recommended by their governing body or required for international competition.

CRY is not currently in a position to comment on the health impact of high doses of caffeine for performance enhancement when taken by children in the general population. However, 1 in 300 young people screened by CRY will be identified with a potentially life threatening cardiac condition. In the case that a young person is identified with a potentially life threatening cardiac condition they may be advised to avoid certain drugs and medications, and may be advised to avoid stimulants. Therefore, I would be concerned about the impact of intense exercise whilst taking performance enhancing drugs or medications (such as high caffeine doses) for young people with undiagnosed cardiac conditions.

This would be just one of many reasons why CRY advocates a position where all young people should have the opportunity to have their heart tested, and why we support the position that all elite/ competitive athletes should have regular heart screening.

I would therefore advocate a position where more research needs to be conducted to evaluate the impact of these products on young at-risk individuals.