



1725 I Street NW • Suite 510 • Washington, DC 20006  
Tel 202-659-0599 • Fax 202-659-0709 • [www.asn-online.org](http://www.asn-online.org)

**EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE**  
October 29, 2009 – 11:00 AM (PDT)

**CONTACT:** Shari Leventhal  
202-558-8423 (cell)  
[sleventhal@asn-online.org](mailto:sleventhal@asn-online.org)

ASN Press Room  
October 28 – 31  
619-525-6267

## **BODYBUILDING WITH STEROIDS DAMAGES KIDNEYS**

*Bulking up with Steroids Harms Kidneys More than Obesity*

EDITOR: The study abstract, “Development of FSGS Following Anabolic Steroid Use in Bodybuilders,” (TH-PO163) will be presented as part of a Poster Session during the American Society of Nephrology’s 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting and Scientific Exposition on Oct. 29, between 10:00 am and 12:00 pm in the Scientific Exposition Hall of the San Diego Convention Center in San Diego, CA.

**Washington, DC (October 21, 2009)** — Athletes who use anabolic steroids may gain muscle mass and strength, but they can also destroy their kidney function, according to a paper being presented at the American Society of Nephrology’s 42nd Annual Meeting and Scientific Exposition in San Diego, CA. The findings indicate that the habitual use of steroids has serious harmful effects on the kidneys that were not previously recognized.

Reports of professional athletes who abuse anabolic steroids are increasingly common. Most people know that using steroids is not good for your health, but until now, their effects on the kidneys have not been known. Leal Herlitz, MD (Columbia University Medical Center) and her colleagues recently conducted the first study describing injury to the kidneys following long-term abuse of anabolic steroids. The investigators studied a group of 10 bodybuilders who used steroids for many years and developed protein leakage into the urine and severe reductions in kidney function. Kidney tests revealed that nine of the ten bodybuilders developed a condition called focal segmental glomerulosclerosis, a type of scarring within the kidneys. This disease typically occurs when the kidneys are overworked. The kidney damage in the bodybuilders has similarities to that seen in morbidly obese patients, but appears to be even more severe.

When the bodybuilders discontinued steroid use their kidney abnormalities improved, with the exception of one individual with advanced kidney disease who developed end-stage kidney failure and required dialysis. Also, one of the bodybuilders started taking steroids again and suffered a relapse of severe kidney dysfunction.

**MORE**

The researchers propose that extreme increases in muscle mass require the kidneys to increase their filtration rate, placing harmful levels of stress on these organs. It's also likely that steroids have direct toxic effects on the kidneys. "Athletes who use anabolic steroids and the doctors caring for them need to be aware of the potentially serious risks to the kidney," said Dr. Herlitz.

The authors report no financial disclosures. This study was conducted in the laboratory of Dr. Vivette D'Agati, MD at Columbia University Medical Center. Study co-authors include Glen Markowitz, MD, Joshua Schwimmer, MD, Michael Stokes, MD, Cheryl Kunis, MD, Vivette D'Agati, MD, (Columbia University Medical Center); Alton Farris, MD, and Robert Colvin, MD (Massachusetts General Hospital).

###

*ASN Renal Week 2009, the largest nephrology meeting of its kind, will provide a forum for 13,000 professionals to discuss the latest findings in renal research and engage in educational sessions related to advances in the care of patients with kidney and related disorders. Renal Week 2009 will take place October 27 – November 1 at the San Diego Convention Center in San Diego.*

*Founded in 1966, the **American Society of Nephrology** (ASN) is the world's largest professional society devoted to the study of kidney disease. Comprised of 11,000 physicians and scientists, ASN continues to promote expert patient care, to advance medical research, and to educate the renal community. ASN also informs policymakers about issues of importance to kidney doctors and their patients. ASN funds research, and through its world-renowned meetings and first-class publications, disseminates information and educational tools that empower physicians.*