

Workplace Drug Testing: Three years experience in the Finnish defense forces

SIRPA MYKKÄNEN¹, PIRJO LILLSUNDE¹, ESA MERIRINNE²
KYÖSTI LEHTOMÄKI², MARKUS HENRIKSSON¹

¹ National Public Health Institute, Laboratory of Alcohol and Substance Abuse, Helsinki, Finland

² Centre for Military Medicine, Finnish Defense Forces, Lahti, Finland.

INTRODUCTION: Drug abuse has been a growing problem in Finland during the last decade. For service safety reasons, this is of major concern in The Finnish Defense Forces. The Finnish Defense Forces planned a anti-drug strategy program in 2002 and it was re-evaluated in 2005 after the Government Decree on Workplace Drug Testing came into force (decree was based on the Act on the Protection of Privacy in Working Life (2004))

AIM OF THE STUDY: The Finnish Defense Forces is a prominent employer in the public sector in Finland. The total number of the professional personnel is about 16500. Information of experience of large-scale workplace drug testing is scarce. The aim of the study was to perform a systematic evaluation of illicit drug use in the Finnish Defence Forces based on chemical analyses of urine samples.

Workplace drug testing in the Finnish Defense Forces: The Finnish Defense Forces has performed workplace drug testing since the year 2002. The tests have been performed to applicants for soldier or civilian posts. People applying for the National Defense Academy have been tested, too. In addition, approximately 5% of the whole serving military and civilian personnel were subjected to random testing in the years 2002-2004, after which the new legislation did not allow this.

LABORATORY ANALYSIS: In the Finnish guidelines accreditation is obligatory for the laboratories performing workplace drug tests. All the The Defense Forces workplace drug test samples have been analyzed by the Laboratory of Alcohol and Substance Abuse in the Finnish National Public Health Institute (the laboratory was accredited in 1998).

Urine screening tests covered amphetamines, opiates, cannabinoids and cocaine. Screening tests were performed by Emit II analyzer, and the positive findings were confirmed by Agilent 6890/5973 gas-chromatography mass spectrometry. Tests for revealing possible sample manipulation was done by analyzing creatinine, nitrite and pH .

RESULTS: Altogether, nearly 2000 subjects were tested during the years 2002-2005. Only in one sample drugs of abuse (cannabis and amphetamine) were confirmed; this was given by a person who applied for a non-soldier post. None among the professionals serving in soldier or civilian posts was tested positive.

CONCLUSION: In spite of the extensive drug test programme only one positive sample was found . There was no difference in positive results between the years 2002-2004 (when the random tests were accepted) and in 2005 (random tests not accepted). It seems that the use of illicit drugs has not spread to the Finnish Defense Forces. Thus far, the anti-drug strategy of the Finnish military appears to be successful.

KEYWORDS: *Workplace Drug Testing, Screening, Confirmation*

Corresponding author: sirpa.mykkanen@ktl.fi