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Position Statement

Title:	Position Statement: Mandatory SRY Gene Testing in Athletes Competing in the Female Category
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The Human Genetics Society of Australasia (HGSA) opposes the use of mandatory *SRY* gene testing as a criterion for eligibility to compete in the female category of women's athletic competition. Such testing – intended to exclude some individuals, which is likely to particularly impact, and may exclude, individuals with differences of sex development – is scientifically reductive, ethically unsound, and medically inappropriate.

The recent decision by World Athletics to require all athletes competing in the female category to undergo *SRY* gene testing—under the premise that the presence of the *SRY* gene reliably determines biological sex—reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of human genetics, biological sex and variation in sex development. World Boxing has introduced a similar “Sex eligibility policy” requiring all competitors to have *SRY* gene testing.

Biological Complexity

Biological sex in humans is determined by a complex interplay of chromosomal, gonadal, hormonal, and phenotypic (physical) factors. The presence of the *SRY* gene alone does not define biological sex. Variants in *SRY* or its downstream pathways can make the gene non-functional and result in individuals with non-functioning gonads and female anatomy and physiology despite the presence of *SRY*.

Relying on *SRY* alone to establish biological sex is therefore inappropriate. The gene's presence only indicates that it exists; not whether it functions. It provides no information about whether testes have developed, whether testosterone is produced and, if so, whether the body can respond to that hormone.

SRY gene testing also does not provide any biologically or medically specific information regarding performance enhancement.

Ethical and Social Implications

Valid consent requires capacity, voluntariness and sufficient information, and should be free of incentives or coercion. Mandatory genetic testing is not voluntary, and therefore violates fundamental principles of medical ethics. A positive *SRY* test in a female athlete can carry profound psychological, social, and career consequences for athletes.

The lack of safeguards – such as standardised genetic counselling protocols, privacy protections, and equitable access to testing – further amplifies these harms, particularly in low-resource settings.

Such practices also contravene international human rights and ethical standards, including the right to bodily autonomy, privacy, and freedom from discrimination, as enshrined in instruments such as the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the *UNESCO Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights*. By mandating genetic testing without valid consent, sporting bodies risk undermining not only medical ethics but also internationally recognised commitments to dignity, equality, and justice.

Mandatory testing in contexts where valid consent cannot reasonably be obtained is only justifiable in strictly limited circumstances, and usually where harm to others (e.g. breath testing for alcohol in drivers) or individuals (e.g. anti-doping testing in sport) is a legitimate risk. As *SRY* gene testing neither protects against harm nor ensures fairness in sport, it is not justifiable to impose upon athletes unable to consent freely to testing.

The Position of the HGSA

The HGSA calls on World Athletics and all sporting governing bodies to:

- Immediately suspend the use of *SRY* gene testing as a criterion for eligibility in the female category
- Acknowledge the complexity of human biological sex and the limitations of relying on genetic markers as simple proxies
- Guarantee that any medical or genetic evaluations conducted in sport are voluntary, evidence-based, respectful of privacy, and supported by appropriate genetic counselling

The HGSA firmly opposes the misuse of genetic testing as a tool for exclusion. We advocate for sporting environments that are:

- Informed by rigorous science rather than reductionist assumptions
- Guided by international ethical and human rights principles
- Committed to fairness, inclusivity, and respect for all athletes