

CHAPTER 13	Investigation 13.A: Evaluating Potential Uses for Human Growth Hormone	BLM 13.2.3
HANDOUT		

Question: Should Health Canada approve the widespread use of synthetic hGH for Canadians?

Issue 1
Until recently, the use of synthetic hGH was approved only for those children who had malfunctioning pituitary glands and could not produce adequate amounts of the hormone themselves. Recently, the use of synthetic hGH has been approved for children who are genetically of short stature. Should people have the option to take synthetic hGH just to increase their genetically predetermined height?
Issue 2
In adults, the production of natural hGH declines with age. This makes it increasingly difficult to reduce one's body fat as one ages. Given that obesity has reached epidemic levels in the North American population, and one of the functions of hGH in the body is to reduce cellular fat, should synthetic hGH be approved as a diet treatment for obesity?
Issue 3
Because one of the functions of hGH in the body is to build lean muscle mass, its use has become widespread among various athletes. In fact, many athletes at the 1996 summer Olympic games in Atlanta, Georgia, referred to the event as the "hGH Games." Despite its expense, many athletes, from baseball players to weightlifters, are acquiring synthetic hGH because it is difficult for drug testers to detect. Should competitive athletes be allowed legal access to synthetic hGH?

Gathering Data and Information

1. Suppose Health Canada is re-evaluating its regulations for the use of synthetic hGH and is asking for input on the matter. Your group will address one of the issues described in the table above. Read the description of the issue. You may wish to research it further using library or Internet resources. As a group, you will write a list of questions that you think should be addressed before Health Canada takes action on this issue. Your questions should address ethical and safety concerns, and possibly specific guidelines for any new regulations.

Organizing Findings

2. Suppose you are attending a forum on hGH use held by Health Canada. Your group has 5 min to present your list of questions to the delegates (your class). You may use visual aids such as computer generated slides, overheads, or a poster. You will have another 5 min to respond to questions from the audience.

Opinions and Recommendations

3. Listen to the other presentations, and then answer the following questions:
 - a) What are the main questions that Health Canada should investigate before changing its regulations on the use of synthetic hGH?

CHAPTER 13	Investigation 13.A: Evaluating Potential Uses for Human Growth Hormone (cont'd)	BLM 13.2.3
HANDOUT		

b) Why might parents want synthetic hGH for their children? What should parents be aware of before deciding to obtain hGH for their children?

c) Should athletes be allowed to use synthetic hGH? Why or why not?

d) Should health insurance cover the use of synthetic hGH, and if so, in which circumstances?

CHAPTER 13	Investigation 13.A: Evaluating Potential Uses for Human Growth Hormone (cont'd)	BLM 13.2.3
HANDOUT		

4. Create a table to record the major societal risks and benefits of approving the use of synthetic hGH in the three situations discussed in the forum. As a class, discuss the arguments for both sides of the issues.