

No let-up in battle against drug cheats

After three cyclists competing at the 2008 Tour de France were caught using CERA, a third generation of the performance-enhancing drug EPO, anti-doping officials in Beijing are increasingly concerned that the drug will be used by athletes during the Olympic Games

EPO – Erythropoietin:

Naturally secreted by kidneys. Produced synthetically by pharmaceutical industry since 1980s

CERA – Continuous Erythropoiesis Receptor Activator: Manufactured by Swiss firm **Roche**

to treat conditions such as anaemia and renal failure

HOW IT WORKS

1. Kidneys: Stimulated to produce more EPO hormone

2. Bone marrow: EPO boosts production of red blood cells

3. Muscles: Higher number of blood cells carry more oxygen to muscles, allowing them to work harder for longer



ATHLETES

Advantages:

CERA has longer-lasting effects than regular EPO, requiring only one monthly dose, thus reducing risk of detection

Adverse effects:

High blood pressure, clogged arteries and veins, swelling of brain, seizures

