

RESEARCH OVERVIEW: NONMEDICAL USE OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Most Commonly Misused Prescription Drugs Among College Students



- Stimulants
 - ▣ For ADHD
- Central Nervous System Depressants
 - ▣ For anxiety and sleep disorders
- Opioids
 - ▣ For pain

College Student Use

- Between 4.1-10.8% of college students reporting using Rx drugs nonmedically in the past year (McCabe et al, 2005; Arria et al, 2008; Teter et al 2006).
- Students who used nonmedical stimulants were more likely to be heavy drinkers (Garnier et al, 2009).
- Students who took an opioid for reasons other than for pain relief (getting high or experimenting) had a much greater risk of experiencing three or more drug-use related problems (McCabe et al, 2007).
- Students who take prescription drugs for nonmedical reasons are at least five times more likely to develop a drug abuse problem than those who don't (McCabe, 2008).

Characteristics Associated with Nonmedical Use of Rx drugs



- ❑ Excessive drinking and other drug use
- ❑ Low perception of harmfulness of using Rx drugs nonmedically
- ❑ Lower GPA
- ❑ Psychiatric distress or depressed mood
- ❑ Skipping class
- ❑ Fraternity/Sorority affiliation

Sources: Garnier-Dykstra et al, 2012; McCabe et al, 2005; Herman-Stahl et al, 2007; Arria et al, 2008; Arria et al, 2011

Reasons for College Student Nonmedical Use of Prescription Drugs

- Improve grades
- Maintaining focus/late-night study sessions/all-nighters
- Lose weight
- Feel good/get high
- Coping with stress
- Parties and social scenes

Nonmedical Use of Prescription Drugs



- Prescription stimulants (such as Ritalin® or Adderall®) are:
 - ▣ Used by individuals who do not have a prescription
 - ▣ Used in a way that was not prescribed per physician's instructions
- Some students mistakenly believe that using these drugs will:
 - ▣ Help them concentrate
 - ▣ Enhance academic performance

Most Common Sources



- Legitimate Prescriptions
 - 5.3% of college students are prescribed ADHA medications.
- Diversion
 - *Defined:* sharing, using, trading, or selling Rx medication.
 - In one study, 61.7% of students with ADHD reported diverting their medication.
 - Most students obtain drugs from a friend who has a prescription.

Source: Garnier ,et al, 2010

Issues



- Potential hybridization (the case of ecstasy)
- New prescription drugs
- Ongoing monitoring
- The public health problem