

The Misuse of Adderall Among College Students

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Abstract:

A number of students across college campuses are misusing Adderall for educational and recreational purposes. Research was found through Penn State's database using keywords such as Adderall, Adderall addiction, Adderall side effects, and Adderall in college. It is hypothesized that college students who misuse Adderall suffer from negative physical and psychological consequences. Previous studies have shown that the misuse of Adderall among college students can lead to a number of side effects, other illegal drug use, and even death.

Assignment:

The goal of this assignment was to create an intro for a future literature review topic of choice. This was for BBH 411W, short paper 3.

Disclaimer:

The purpose of writing the writing is to fulfill course requirements for BBH 411W and to stand as a personal writing sample, but the findings should not be treated as generalizable research.

Introduction:

There are times in college where schoolwork seems to be piling up. Students tend to find themselves swamped with an overwhelming amount of exams and papers all in one week. There are many different ways students handle a large workload. Taking Adderall has become popular among college students for studying and pulling “all nighters” (Veliz et al. 2013). Some researchers consider the use of Adderall among students who do not have ADHD as cheating. Taking Adderall to study or before an exam gives students the advantage of getting a better grade. It was found that college students who take Adderall do significantly better than students who do not take it (Stolz, 2012).

Adderall is a stimulant normally prescribed for patients with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, the severity of ADHD is based on levels of impulsivity, inattention, and hyperactivity. Patients with this disorder tend to act before they think, get distracted easily, are not able to focus on certain tasks given to them, and are extremely active. The exact reasons for these actions are unknown. However, recent studies have shown that genetics and environmental factors may play a role in the development of ADHD (Cortese, 2012).

There are several medications to help treat ADHD such as Ritalin and Adderall. However, Adderall is the preferred treatment by many patients. It is a mixture of amphetamine and dextroamphetamine. Together, these drugs stimulate the central nervous system and have an affect on chemicals in the brain that are

associated with hyperactivity and impulse control. Adderall increases patients' attention and makes them feel more awake and alert (Stieglitz, 2009).

However, there are several side effects that may occur including high blood pressure, depression, anxiety, insomnia, irritability, and a loss of appetite (Faraone & Biederman, 2002). A study was done to evaluate the side effects associated with Adderall using a placebo-controlled approach. Patients were 5 to 18 years old and met the diagnostic criteria for ADHD. A questionnaire was administered to the participants taking Adderall and participants taking the placebo. Loss of appetite, insomnia, and stomachaches were the worst side effects reported for high and low doses of Adderall. Headaches reported were worse among the children receiving a high dose of Adderall. This implies that side effects can differ among different doses of Adderall (Ahmann et al. 2001).

Knowing that Adderall can improve focus and attention, college students use Adderall so they can enhance their work performance. Most students who abuse Adderall are not even prescribed to it. However, 30-40% of college students who are prescribed to it also misuse it at least once (Lakhan & Kirchgessner, 2012).

A study was done from November 2011 to May 2012 to evaluate how many college students abuse Adderall for school purposes. Social media was used to gather real information without any bias. Twitter was monitored and searched for tweets that contained the word "Adderall". Using the tweets found, volume of use around exam periods, differences between colleges, and mentioned side effects were evaluated (Hanson et al. 2013).

It was found that the number of times Adderall was mentioned increased during college exams and finals. Students who attend college in the northeast and southern areas mentioned Adderall use the most. Out of the 213,633 tweets evaluated, more tweets mentioned using Adderall to study than any other purpose (Hanson et al. 2013).

To evaluate where college students are getting their Adderall from, a web survey was conducted in 2003 that included 9,161 random undergraduate students enrolled in a large college located in the Midwest. A total of 18 sources were identified and categorized into family, peer, and other sources. Most of the students reported getting their Adderall from peers. Students who obtained the prescription medicine from peers reported higher rates of alcohol and drug usage compared to students who obtained it from family (McCabe et al. 2005). Another source reported that students are even faking having ADHD so they can get prescriptions for Adderall from their doctors. This has resulted in a shortage of Adderall for people with ADHD who actually need the medication (Mitchell, 2012).

Students tend not to be aware of consequences of misusing Adderall. 175 undergraduate students were interviewed to see how they view the use of Adderall. Most of them perceived the illegal use of Adderall as physically harmless and acceptable. The students justified their use by saying they were using it for the right reasons, that there were worse drugs they could be doing, and that if they used it in moderation they were not at risk for any negative consequences. Students also viewed the misuse of Adderall as acceptable because it is not a main focus of law

enforcement, and because it is regulated and prescribed by medical facilities (Desantis & Hane, 2009).

It is very clear that the misuse of Adderall has become a huge problem in college students among universities worldwide. It has become a popular way to enhance school performance because of its super-enhanced focusing effects. It has become so popular that even if students are not prescribed to it, they find ways to obtain Adderall anyway. Something needs to be done to make students realize how dangerous and unethical abusing stimulant drugs can be.

This literature review evaluates the use of Adderall among college students. It takes a look at how misusing and abusing the drug can lead to negative physical and psychological consequences such as addictions and other illegal drug use. Moreover, it discusses the potential health hazards and side effects of taking Adderall that students may not be aware of.

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