



Addiction Generation: Stimulant Abuse in College Students



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Methods

A literature search was conducted from October 2021 – November 2021 to identify the history, contributing factors and consequences of stimulant abuse in college students. The ultimate product of this research was a literature review. Databases used were CINAHL, PubMed, PsychINFO, and ProQuest Central. 38 pieces of literature were selected for review by the researcher regarding the topic of stimulant abuse in college students. Articles could be no older than ten years (except in cases of historical documentation), focus on adolescents, and must have been peer-reviewed. Outcomes for this research were to gain a better understanding of stimulant abuse, identify who is most affected by stimulant abuse, and propose interventions that can be implemented to prevent stimulant abuse.

Keywords: Stimulant abuse, nonmedical stimulant use, nonprescription stimulant use, prescription stimulant use, misuse of stimulants, substance use disorder, Ritalin, Adderall, study drug.

Research Question

In college students, what is the effect of lax systems of prescription, intervention, and punishment in comparison to educated populations, stricter prescriptions laws and college-led discipline on prescription stimulant abuse and misuse?

Interventions

- **College-led Interventions**
 - Examine the prevalence of campus stimulant abuse
 - Train faculty and staff in signs and symptoms
 - Educate/Prepare students for pressures of college
- **Physician led Interventions**
 - Implement Medication Regimens
 - Clinician Training on drug-seeking behaviors
 - Education on how to discuss addictive substances
- **Parent-led Interventions**
 - Stimulant abuse may start in high school
 - Educate parents on healthy pressure
 - Educate parents on supporting healthy transitions

Gaps in Research

- **Risk factors vs. protective factors** - there is very little research on protective factors
- **Campus attitude and culture** - no research has been done on the impact of campus culture on stimulant abuse.
- **More research into the cognitive effects of stimulants** would be helpful in determining appropriate strategies to prevent stimulant abuse.
- **More research into why students divert stimulants** is going to be necessary to develop policies and programs that can prevent diversion from occurring.

Fast Facts About Stimulant Abuse

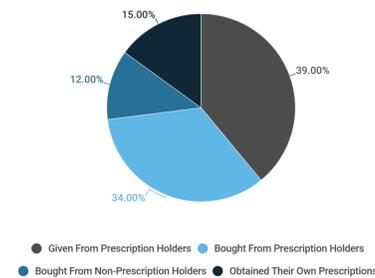
Why do Students abuse stimulants?

Stimulants, otherwise known as ADHD medications, have a reputation among high school and college students as “study buddies.” These medications are viewed as a pill that will make studying long hours easier and increase retention. Unfortunately, this attitude is increasing among college students, and can lead to serious consequences

Sources of Stimulants

The main sources of prescription stimulants are friend, with 34% of students reporting they bought them off a prescription holder, 39% reported a prescription holder gave them the medications, and 12% reported buying them off a nonprescription holder. The other option that approximately 15% of student go for is to fake a diagnosis of ADHD and get their own prescription.

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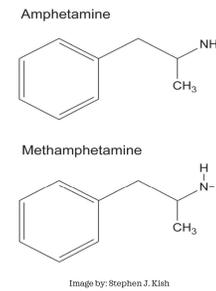


Motives for Stimulant Abuse:

- Academic Pressure – Students may feel they need stimulants to keep up with the workload
- Collegiate Lifestyle – late nights and long hours make stimulants an attractive option for a boost of energy
- Socio-cultural Factors – because these medications are made in a lab and tested, they are viewed as safe to take without a prescription

Chemical make-up

The only difference between Amphetamines (stimulants) and Methamphetamine is the methyl group on the end, which allows Methamphetamine to cross the blood brain barrier faster.



Consequences of Stimulant Abuse

Minor side effects:

- Difficulty sleeping
- Headaches
- Irritability/Nervousness
- Decreased appetite
- Decreased academic self efficacy

Life threatening side effects:

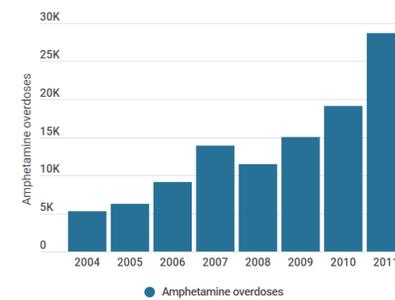
- Depression
- Seizures
- Cardiac side effects
- Psychiatric comorbidities
- Death

Legal consequences of stimulant abuse:

- Stimulant abuse is considered a felony in most states and can lead to prison time
- Most academic institutions categorize stimulant abuse as cheating.

There has been a 441% increase in overdoses related to stimulants from 2004-2011

ER visits due to overdose



- 81% of students who abuse stimulants don't have reliable information about the medications.

Definitions

Stimulant: any drug that excites bodily functions. More specifically those that stimulate the brain and central nervous system. Stimulants induce alertness, elevated mood, wakefulness, increased speech and motor activity and decreased appetite. They produce things like rapid heartbeat, increased breathing rate, pupil dilation, sweating, and increased blood pressure.

Illicit stimulant use/stimulant abuse: Illicit stimulant use is defined as the use of prescription stimulants without a legitimate prescription or using stimulants inconsistent with the prescribed treatment plan, including diversion and inappropriate administration methods.

Protective factors: are defined as “a characteristic at the biological, psychological, family, or community (including peers and culture) level that is associated with a lower likelihood of problem outcomes or that reduces the negative impact of a risk factor on problem outcomes”

Conclusion

Legislation addressing the issues of doctor shopping, accessibility, and doubling up on prescriptions could help reduce the flow of stimulants onto the market. Educating students on the dangers of illicit stimulant use will be important in the fight against stimulant abuse. Moreover, changing the attitudes surrounding the effectiveness of stimulants as cognitive enhancers may help decrease student abuse. Educating parents on the importance of support, awareness, and honesty with their children, specifically those prescribed stimulants, can help students deal with the inevitable academic pressures. Finally, we need to examine the education of our healthcare professionals. Healthcare professionals need education on the importance of screening measures, the signs of stimulant abuse, and how they can help prevent abuse from occurring. Addressing this issue will require a unified front from colleges, medical professionals, legislative bodies, and parents.

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