

Topic: ADHD Medication and College Students

Speech Type: Claim of Fact

Specific purpose: To prove that college students without ADHD are taking advantage of the benefits of ADHD medication.

Thesis: The use of ADHD medication has become a popular trend among college students.

Organizational Pattern: Topical

Length: 9 min. and 35 seconds (9:35)

INTRODUCTION

A college student at Greensboro College in North Carolina, named Richard Fee, felt the pressure of his college curriculum. To cope with this, Fee took ADHD medication to help him focus and study for long periods of time. What started off as occasional usage of ADHD medication during his undergraduate years eventually turned into abuse and addiction after graduation. His misuse of these drugs caused him to become aggressive and delusional, until he got to the point of physically threatening his parents and climbing on the roof of his house to converse with the stars and the moon. Last year, his ADHD medication prescription ran out so he committed suicide.

As college students, we all feel the pressure of achieving academic success. Sometimes this results in pulling all-nighters to cram before a big exam the next day. I would like to inform you of the alternative study method of taking ADHD medication.

It may appear to most Americans that ADHD medication is a carefully distributed drug based on informed medical opinion and prescriptions, but such pharmaceuticals have become easily accessible to people without ADHD. Accessibility, along with academic pressures, is why ADHD medication has become a popular trend among college students.

First, I will give you some overview information on ADHD and its treatment.

Second, I will demonstrate that college students are taking ADHD medication to improve their academic performance.

Third, I will explain how accessible these drugs are on college campuses.

Transition: First, let me give you a brief overview of what ADHD is and how it can be treated.

BODY

I. Overview of ADHD

A. According to the American Psychological Association, Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, or ADHD, is a behavioral condition that makes focusing on

- everyday tasks challenging. A person who has ADHD experiences inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsiveness.
- B. According to WebMD, the exact cause for ADHD is unknown; however, possible causes include heredity or a chemical imbalance in the brain (Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder).
 - C. You may have heard of names like Ritalin, Adderall, Dexedrine, and Vyvanse. These are the most commonly prescribed stimulants that treat ADHD symptoms. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (“DrugFacts...”, 2009), stimulants work by increasing dopamine levels in the brain, which is the neurotransmitter that is connected to movement, attention, motivation, and pleasure. Stimulants help to enhance concentration and reduce impulsive and hyperactive tendencies.

Transition: Now that you know what a stimulant is, let us discuss the reasons for college students’ illicit use of stimulants.

II. Research indicates that ADHD medication acts as a study aid for students to earn better grades and achieve academic success.

- A. First, Nancy Shute, a clinical neurologist, conducted a study on college study habits and she reported to the National Public Radio (NPR) that 8 to 35 percent of students have admitted to using stimulant pills (ADHD drugs) to improve school performance (Shute, 2013).
 - 1. College students across the country feel pressured by academic standards to perform at an extreme level of efficiency. To live up to this societal expectation, prescription drugs like Adderall and Ritalin are illicitly used.
- B. Second, according to a study by the Journal of American College Health, 72 percent of college students used [ADHD medication] to stay awake to study, 66 percent to concentrate on work, 36 percent to memorize, and 12 percent to make work more interesting (DeSantis, Journal of American College Health, 2008).
 - 1. ADHD medication is the drug of choice for most teenagers because it enhances several key academic abilities such as engagement, concentration, memory, and personal relevancy that are necessary to achieve satisfactory grades.
- C. Third, 36 percent of real Adderall and Ritalin users from Desantis' American College Health study equated intelligence with a heightened facility to memorize and retain information. They attributed academic success with abilities that are amplified while under the influence of ADHD drugs. (DeSantis, Journal of American College Health, 2008).
 - 1. The college curriculum seems to assess knowledge based on excessive memorization and information regurgitation. Because many students believe intelligence and having a large memory capacity are one in the same, prescription pills are used to enhance mediocre memorization abilities.

Transition: There are several motivators that explain why college students are using ADHD medication for academic achievement. I have just underlined three: 1) societal pressures to live up to unrealistic educational expectations, 2) The effects of the drugs augment valuable study

skills like engagement, concentration, memory, and personal relevancy, and 3) a problematic assessment of intelligence encourages the use of outside sources to be "good enough." As you can see, the usage of ADHD medication among the college demographic is strongly motivated by academic achievement, but the easy access to these drugs is an equally compelling reason for the popular trend on college campuses.

III. Data suggests that college students have easy access to ADHD medication from several key sources including friends, significant others, and medical professionals who are giving too many prescriptions based on faulty patient symptoms.

- A. Results from the American College Health study found that 89 percent of users obtained substances from friends/significant others, 8 percent from strangers, and 4 percent from having a prescription based on faked symptoms. (DeSantis, 2008).
 - 1. ADHD drugs are a valuable commodity among the college community. Due to this high demand, all students have to do to obtain them is to seek out someone from their social circle, whether that be a friend, loved one, or peer on campus. There is a great likelihood that the average college student already knows someone who has access to the drug.

- B. Research conducted at IMS Health, a prominent international pharmaceutical distributor, found that the college demographic is being prescribed ADHD medication at extremely high rates. Medications dispensed to teenagers and young adults have risen 26 percent since 2007, which increases the prescription total to 21 million yearly (Schwarz, 2013a).
 - 1. College-aged individuals are being given ADHD prescriptions at higher rates than they have ever been and that increases the circulation and access to the drug immensely on college campuses.

- C. Out of 1,811 participants in Desantis' American College Health study, 85 percent thought obtaining illicit stimulants was either very easy or somewhat easy. (DeSantis, 2008).
 - 1. ADHD medication is not as much of a carefully prescribed drug as most people believe because users are able to acquire the medication by exerting minimal to no effort at all.

Transition: I have shown that academics and the accessible nature of the drug are reasons for the increased use of ADHD medication on college campuses.

CONCLUSION

The Richard Fee story told earlier was a tragic example of the health concerns related to misuse of ADHD medication, which I will go further into depth in my next speech. When taken illicitly and over an extended period of time, users may experience serious side effects like depression, aggression, anxiety, paranoia, addiction, and even psychosis, as seen in Fee's case.

Despite the health risks, college students' primary motivator is to achieve academic success, which causes them to seek the assistance of ADHD medication. ADHD medication offers college students the ability to stay focused and increase their memory while studying. ADHD medication is also easily obtainable for college students, thus intensifying its illicit usage.

Because college students share a collective goal of doing well academically, taking ADHD medication has become a common practice among college campuses.

References

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