

Topic: ADHD Medication Policies for Colleges

Speech Type: Claim of Policy

Specific Purpose: To provide solutions for the misuse of ADHD medication on college campuses.

Thesis: In order to prevent the illicit use of ADHD medication among college students, colleges should make the process of ADHD diagnosis more thorough, deem illicit stimulant use as a violation of their codes of conduct, and implement more effective education tactics on college campuses.

Organizational Pattern: Problem-Solution

Length: 11 minutes 35 seconds (11:35)

INTRODUCTION

As you may recall from our previous speech, Richard Fee was a tragic example of what can happen when you illicitly use ADHD medication as a study aid in college. Fee's addiction to Adderall caused him to be very erratic, have fits of rage, see hallucinations, and ultimately spiral out of control. Although Fee's story is one example, his problem is not isolated. As mentioned in our previous speech, Nancy Shute, a clinical neurologist, studied college study habits and found that 8 to 35 percent of students have admitted to using stimulant pills (ADHD drugs) to improve school performance (Shute, 2013). Therefore, it is clear that many college students across the country have employed the same study methods as Richard Fee. In fact, I know it happens at our very own Elmhurst College. Ironically, while researching the harmful health effects of stimulant abuse, I overheard students in the library complaining about the amount of homework they had to do that day. One student suggested, “Just take Adderall.”

Just to recap, those who take ADHD medication without ADHD may experience serious side effects like depression, aggression, paranoia, heart problems, addiction, and even psychosis (Schwarz, 2013a).

Many college students—like all of us here today—highly prioritize academics and have a desire to do well in this area. However, some students are willing to jeopardize their health by taking ADHD medication to achieve academic success. I would like to inform you of possible solutions to combat this problem.

In order to prevent the illicit use of ADHD medication among college students, colleges should make the process of ADHD diagnosis more thorough, deem illicit stimulant use as a violation of their codes of conduct, and implement more effective education tactics on college campuses.

First, I will explain how the process of diagnosis can be enhanced to reduce the number of students who illicitly take stimulants.

Second, I will explain why colleges should make illicit stimulant use a violation of their codes of conduct to prevent students from misusing the drug.

Third, I will discuss effective educational strategies that can be used to better inform college students of the risks associated with ADHD medication for academic purposes.

Transition: First, I will explain how the process of diagnosis can be enhanced to reduce the number of students who illicitly take stimulants.

BODY

I. Problem: any individual cases suggest that the process of diagnosis for ADHD by medical personnel is not thorough enough, making ADHD medication easily obtainable for students who are simply faking symptoms. A more lengthy and rigorous process of diagnosis would lead to a reduction in students illicitly receiving prescriptions.

- A. A student at Columbia University, Stephen Perez, was encouraged by a classmate to go to their campus's health services to obtain Adderall for studying purposes. Perez's friend described the medical personnel as "giv[ing Adderall] out like it's candy."
 1. After filling out a short questionnaire with questions like "were you fidgety as a child?" and meeting with a psychiatrist for only 10 minutes, Perez had obtained a prescription (Snow, Cohen, Koch, & Tyler, 2012).
 - a. This is an example of how easily a student without ADHD can fake symptoms without the in-depth and lengthy, but necessary, process of a proper diagnosis.
 - b. Perez later went on to sell his extra medication, further spreading the abuse of ADHD medication on his campus.
- B. Many doctors suggest that ADHD medications should not be prescribed on a patient's first visit to prevent students from falsifying their symptoms.
 1. According to Dr. Connors, a past professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Duke University Medical Center, another way that doctors can make an appropriate ADHD diagnosis and deter students from faking symptoms is to take a detailed life history of the student, including information about the student's difficulties from a parent or teacher (Schwarz, 2013b).
 2. Fresno State, prior to its decision to not diagnose students at all, tightened its rules on the process of diagnosis for ADHD.

- a. One student, Lisa Breach, went through two months of testing and paperwork before the student health office approved her diagnosis of ADHD.
 - b. She then had to sign a formal contract in which she promised to submit to drug testing, to see a mental health professional every month, and to not share the pills before she could get her prescription filled.
 - c. She claims that this difficult process discouraged many of her classmates from attempting to falsify their symptoms to obtain stimulants (Schwarz, 2013a).
- C. Some schools, including George Mason and William & Mary, do not allow their campus health centers to make ADHD diagnoses or prescribe stimulants because of the time and expertise needed to make an accurate diagnosis. Instead, they refer students to off-campus providers for the necessary neuropsychological testing and conversations with parents and teachers.
- 1. This refusal of diagnosis and prescriptions by certain colleges ensures that students are receiving the amount of attention and time needed to make a proper diagnosis, while also being evaluated by experienced professionals.
 - 2. Like we discussed in class, George Mason and William & Mary are "outsourcing" their non-technical core functions, which are diagnosing and handing out prescriptions, to medical institutions to eliminate the responsibility of diagnosis that medical professionals usually handle.
 - a. By doing this, these universities can focus on their relevant functions as education providers.
 - (1.) University of Vermont has applied this change of not performing ADHD diagnoses, and Dr. Jon Porter, their director of medical, counseling, and psychiatry services, remarked on the student reaction to this policy change, "We get complaints that you're making it hard to get treatment. There's some truth to that. The counterweight is these prescriptions can be abused at a high rate, and we're not willing to be a part of that and end up with kids sick or dead" (Schwarz, 2013b).
 - b. The medical stakes of students without ADHD obtaining stimulants are so high that colleges should take these extra precautions when diagnosing ADHD, thus hopefully deterring those who are faking symptoms from receiving stimulants.

Transition: Second, colleges should make illicit stimulant use a violation of their codes of conduct to prevent students from misusing the drug.

II. Solution 1: Studies show that deeming certain behaviors as violations of a college's code of conduct actually reduces the frequency of that behavior, as seen with

cheating and plagiarism. By including illicit stimulant use in college handbooks, students may be less likely to use stimulants.

- A. Donald McCabe, an expert on academic cheating at Rutgers University, studied cheating on college campuses. According to his forty years of research, colleges with codes of conduct, or honor codes, displayed about a 25% decrease in cheating (Pope and Anderson, 2012).
1. Since codes of conduct against behaviors like cheating or plagiarism deter students from performing said behaviors, why wouldn't it have the same effect on stimulant abuse for academic purposes?
- B. In 2011, Duke included “the unauthorized use of prescription medication to enhance academic performance” as a category of academic dishonesty, which constitutes misusing ADHD medication as cheating (Schwarz, 2013b).
1. Duke is one of the first schools to document illicit stimulant use as a violation of academic dishonesty, and consequently also a violation of their code of conduct.
 2. As seen with our first point, students tend to avoid behaviors that are a stated violation of their school's code of conduct because the code of conduct makes the students more accountable for misusing ADHD medication.
 3. Therefore, college students are more afraid of getting caught, but more importantly, values of integrity and trust are instilled among the entire campus and within each individual.
 4. Ultimately, the code of conduct and the values gained from it will deter students from abusing ADHD medication for academic enhancement (Pope and Anderson, 2012).

Transition: Third, I will discuss effective educational strategies that can be used to better inform college students of the risks associated with ADHD medication for academic purposes.

III. Solution 2: Research shows that when colleges utilize educational programs that highlight the dangers of the unwanted behavior—like drinking programs utilized across the country—it informs the student population, while also reducing the occurrence of the behavior. The same effect would occur if applied to the illicit use of ADHD medication because, like binge drinking, illicit stimulant use is a frequent behavior on college campuses that results from a lack of education and intervention.

- A. Fagan et al. found that of those who misuse the drug [ADHD medication], 63% were never educated about them, and only 27% knew about dangerous side effects such as sudden death. This data suggests a correlation between insufficient knowledge of the drug and abuse of the drug (Fagan et al., 2009).
1. This is an example of the lack of knowledge that college students have pertaining to ADHD medication.
 2. Almost a third of students who illicitly take these drugs are unaware of the health effects that are involved.

3. There is a strong need for education so that the student body can be adequately informed about the consequences of illicit ADHD use before they make the decision to abuse the drug.
- B. According to a survey by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, 40% of teens think prescription drugs are "much safer" to use than illegal drugs and 29% think prescription drugs are not addictive (Morris, 2013).
1. This is yet another example that proves that the college demographic as a whole is uninformed of the true nature of ADHD medication. Eliminating this problem is a crucial step towards reducing illicit stimulant abuse on college campuses.
- C. In 2010, a Vanderbilt student named Kyle Craig committed suicide after abusing Adderall to maintain his grades. Vanderbilt responded to this tragedy by incorporating the dangers of stimulant misuse into their freshman orientation, much like programs on safe sex and binge drinking. (Schwarz, 2013b).
1. This form of education and awareness led to a substantial decrease in the number of reported cases of stimulant use that year among Vanderbilt students (Schwarz, 2013b).
 2. Vanderbilt is a prominent example of a college that educates its students on ADHD medication abuse. If other universities adopted this form of education, the frequency of illicit stimulant use would decrease significantly across all college campuses.

Transition: I have just demonstrated how implementing a more thorough diagnosis process, incorporating illicit stimulant use into codes of conduct, and utilizing more effective educational tactics can prevent college students without ADHD from using stimulants.

CONCLUSION

As stated in our claim of fact speech, the misuse of ADHD medication as a study aid on college campuses has become a popular trend. This problem continues to occur across the country, even at our very own college. In order to reduce the abuse of stimulants, college campuses should pursue the following courses of action: make the diagnosis process more thorough, include the misuse of ADHD medication in college codes of conduct, and utilize more effective educational strategies. These measures, which other colleges have already implemented, could provide a three-step solution towards the prevention of illicit stimulant use.

References

- Bombardieri, M. (2013, 07). “Dartmouth College tackles binge drinking culture.” *Metro*. Retrieved 11, 2013, from <http://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2013/07/27/dartmouth-college-tackles-binge-drinking/7XhiEUe2v1WB0LY44vqkjP/story.html>
- Fagan, J., Geesey, A., Jadhav, M., Kaur, G., Lelkes, V., Nasreen, T., & Perez, J. (2009). “Prevalence of psychostimulant use among university students.” Rutgers University. New Brunswick, NJ.
- Morris, C. (2013 February 10). “More college students abusing ADHD drugs.” *The Record News*. Retrieved from <http://www.troyrecord.com/general-news/20130210/more-college-students-abusing-adhd-drugs>
- Pope, J., Anderson, L. (2012 August 31). “Can an honor code prevent cheating at Harvard?” *Yahoo News*. Retrieved from <http://news.yahoo.com/honor-code-prevent-cheating-harvard-201345806.html>
- Schwarz, A. (2013b, April 30). “Attention-deficit drugs face new campus rules.” *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/01/us/colleges-tackle-illicit-use-of-adhd-pills.html>
- Schwarz, A. (2013a, February 3). “Drowned in a stream of prescriptions.” *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/03/us/concerns-about-adhd-practices-and-amphetamine-addiction.html>
- Shute, N. (2013). Neurologists warn against ADHD drugs to help kids study. *NPR*. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2013/03/13/174193454/neurologists-warn-against-adhd-drugs-to-help-kids-study>
- Wright, C. (2013, August 15). “Stress of school leads some students to try 'academic doping'.” *Orlando Sentinel*. Retrieved from http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/2013-08-15/health/os-students-academic-doping-20130709_1_adhd-high-school-students-adderall