

Steroids for Students: How ADD medication is changing study habits

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As the stresses of high school and college classes pile on, and students are in a constant state of competing with one another for college and grad school, efforts for scholastic success have never been higher. This situation, combined with an increasingly medicated American population, has brought about an onslaught of prescription drug abuse by young people. In the case of studying, one particular drug, Adderall, is an attention-deficit disorder medication that is being abused by students who are trying to study hard and get an edge over others.

The intended purpose of this drug is to help increase concentration for those diagnosed with ADD. However, due to the frequent diagnosis of this disorder among young people, the drug is easy to pass around, and maintains a high value on the student-to-student drug market. One anonymous Orange County college student reports spending over three dollars for each pill, while another touts the allegedly indisputable benefits:

“It’s just something to be taken casually, and carefully. If you use the right dosage and you don’t take it often, then it’s just something to use to help you study.”

This logic proves to be standard among many of my peers in my Sophomore year at a prestigious private university. The dangerous side effects of Adderall, ranging from aggression, mania, and even symptoms of tourettism are minimized, if not completely ignored by students. Regardless of the physical reaction, though, is this simple question: why do healthy people need drugs to focus and study?

Did the founding fathers take Adderall when they wrote the Declaration of Independence? Did Martin Luther King take ADD medication to add direction to his speeches? True greatness comes from personal effort and determination, and these shortcuts are representative of a medicating society that promotes chemical dependency. The person who takes Adderall in college may later turn to other drugs to make life easier, whether it is studying, going to work, or simply unwinding from a long day.

The outside effects of this recent trend are numerous. For every buyer of Adderall, there is a seller. This is the 14-year old who genuinely needs the medication to focus, but finds out that he can get premium prices for his new prescription.

The cliché that there are no shortcuts to any place worth going rings true for this drug, and honest work will always pay off more in the long run than a quick session of drug-induced cramming. Students need to prepare for the real world, and while a drug can help them study for a few extra hours, the consequence can be a lifetime of dependency, and a lowered level of confidence in one's own capabilities. In the end, doesn't it just make more sense to pay attention in class?