

COLLEGE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF NON-MEDICAL USE OF PRESCRIPTION STIMULANTS BY THEIR PEERS

“I don’t feel like students taking pills in order to help them hit the books and obtain good grades in our competitive university system is such a bad thing. I feel like students who are taking them to drink and of course snorting them is a big deal. Mixing chemicals like that could be very dangerous.”

Findings from the March 2005 Administration of The Student Drug Research (SDR) Survey

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OVERVIEW

The Student Drug Research survey (SDR) is a new indicator of emerging drug use trends to be monitored by the Maryland Drug Early Warning System (DEWS) staff at CESAR. Each month, the SDR will collect college students' perceptions of drugs use trends among fellow students. A structured questionnaire will be mailed to a consistent panel of 26 student researchers. These students report on drugs that they have observed or heard about in the past month, but they do not report on their personal drug use. While the survey covers a variety of drugs, this report focuses only on the findings about non-medical use of prescription stimulants. Future DEWS reports will contain findings about other drugs.

Note: The findings presented are obtained from a small group of students believed to be most familiar with psychoactive drug use. The results therefore may not reflect the perceptions of the general student population.

METHODS

- A consistent panel of 26 local college students was recruited to be student researchers, based on their responses to a prior drug use inventory.
- A structured questionnaire (Appendix A) was mailed to each of these students to complete and return by mail. The questionnaire obtains perceptions of emerging drugs and drug trends around campus; no information about the personal use of drugs is obtained.

- **March survey topics:**
 - Perceptions of the availability of drugs around campus
 - Observations on new drug fads or trends around campus
 - Perceptions of the availability and use of different prescription stimulants around campus for non-medical use
 - Perceptions of why students use prescription stimulants non-medically
- 23 of 26 students completed the March survey and received a payment of \$20.
- This report contains only findings regarding the non-medical use of prescription drugs.

FINDINGS

(Table 1)

- Almost all respondents said that alcohol, marijuana and Adderall[®] were easy or very easy to obtain on campus.
- Respondents were much less likely to perceive Concerta[®] (6) to be easy to obtain, compared to Adderall[®] (22) and Ritalin[®] (16).
- Respondents were most likely to say they did not know how available Concerta[®] was (16).

Table 1. Availability of Drugs around Campus

(N=23 respondents)

<u>Drug*</u>	<u>Very Easy or Easy (to get)</u> <u>(f)</u>	<u>Don't Know</u> <u>(f)</u>
Alcohol	23	0
Marijuana	23	0
Adderall [®]	22	0
Psychedelic Mushrooms	17	3
Ritalin [®]	16	2
Vicodin [®]	12	7
Powder Cocaine	11	5
OxyContin [®]	7	7
Concerta [®]	6	16
Amphetamines	5	10
Ecstasy	5	8

*12 other drugs that had 4 or fewer responses of Very Easy or Easy, were omitted from this table.

FINDINGS

(Table 2)

- All respondents reported that Adderall[®] 10mg was easy or very easy to obtain; Concerta[®] and “generic Concerta[®]” (not marketed yet) were least likely to be reported to be easily available—most students (16) did not even know whether these two drugs were available.
- Respondents knew more people who used Adderall[®] and Ritalin[®]; few knew anyone that used either type of Dexedrine or Concerta[®] (data not presented).
- More respondents reported that they had heard about students using Benzedrine[®] (5) than a list of 15 other types of prescription stimulants (see question 4 in the Appendix A).

**Table 2. Availability of Prescription Stimulants
(n=23)**

<u>Type of Rx Stimulant</u>	<u>Very Easy or Easy to Get</u> (f)	<u>Don't Know</u> (f)
Adderall [®] (10mg)	23	0
Adderall [®] (XR)	16	6
Ritalin [®] (20mg)	13	3
Ritalin [®] (SR)	9	9
Dexedrine [®] (5mg)	6	12
Dexedrine Spansule [®]	5	12
Concerta [®]	5	16
Generic Concerta [®]	4	16

FINDINGS

(Table 3)

- Respondents think that the most common reasons why students are using prescription stimulants non-medically are for studying and taking exams.
- The next most common reasons were for partying and increasing alcohol or other drug use or effects.
- One respondent noted that some students may be using prescription stimulants to help them “drive long distances”.
- Use for losing weight, enhancing athletic performance and promotion of sexual activity were perceived to be less common.

Table 3. Students’ Perceptions of Why Students Use Prescription Stimulants Non-Medically

<u>Reason (# of respondents)</u>	<u>Mean of Responses</u> (1= less common → 5=more common)
Help cram for a test (23)	4.78
Take right before exam to help focus on exam (20)	4.30
Help study in general, not including cramming (22)	3.95
Get excited/“up” for a party (22)	3.41
Stay awake to drink longer (21)	3.05
Increase the effects of alcohol (23)	3.04
Stay awake to party longer, not including drinking (22)	3.00
Increase the effects of other drugs (21)	3.00
To deal with depression (20)	2.70
Reduce anxiety (21)	2.62
To lose weight (20)	2.55
Reduce inhibitions (17)	2.53
Get excited/“up” for a sporting event (21)	2.05
Help wake up in the morning (20)	2.00
Perform better in athletics (15)	1.80
Promote sexual activity (19)	1.58

Selected Responses to Qualitative Questions

When asked to report any other information about students' non-medical use of prescription stimulants, every respondent who chose to comment (14) did so by commenting on the use of Adderall.[®]

Adderall[®] Use:

- “Adderall[®], ‘addies’ increase in use as midterms/finals approach. Everyone who needs that ‘edge’ takes Adderall[®] before long nights of studying.”
- “I would say that 30% and maybe closer to 50% of students have used Adderall[®] as a study aid.”
- “Almost any student I talk to has used or is using Adderall[®] to help them study.”
- “It’s being used like caffeine.”
- “Acquaintances use it to help study, doesn’t appear people take it to really get high.”

Adderall[®] Group Use/Route:

- Adderall[®] is being used “alone or in groups” for “long study sessions.” There is a “dependency on Adderall[®] to improve grades.”
- “Adderall[®] is often snorted to help study.”
- “Many snort to achieve quicker effect, usually taken for studying purposes and not to get high.”

Other prescription stimulant mentions (Only 1 or 2 respondents mentioned Ritalin[®], Concerta[®], and Dexedrine[®] use):

Concerta[®]:

- “Concerta[®] ‘Certa’ increases in use as mid-terms/finals come around. Used by those who need “that edge” before long nights of studying. People I know that took it think it is stronger than Adderall[®].”

Dexedrine:

- “I have never heard of students taking Dexedrine[®] to drink or crushing it up and snorting it. I know Dexedrine[®] works very similar to Adderall[®] in how it helps someone focus, but I don’t think it lasts very long.”

Other comments:

- “Seems like high levels of stress indicate more want for prescription stimulants.”
- “I don’t feel like students taking pills in order to help them hit the books and obtain good grades in our competitive university system is such a bad thing. I feel like students who are taking them to drink and of course snorting them is a big deal. Mixing chemicals like that could be very dangerous.”

CONCLUSIONS/IMPLICATIONS

- Adderall[®] appears to be the prescription stimulant most commonly used non-medically on campus. Respondents report that it is easy to obtain and that students mainly use it to help them study.
- Concerta[®] is rarely used non-medically and most respondents were unaware of its availability around campus.
- Based on information from several acquaintances, one respondent indicated that Concerta[®] is stronger than Adderall[®]. This suggests that use of Concerta[®] should be monitored to determine whether abuse of the drug emerges.
- Respondents report that prescription stimulants are used as study aids to enhance academic performance. This suggests an increase of use on campus during exam time.
- Respondents report that prescription stimulants do not seem to be used to aid in weight loss or to enhance athletic performance.

Student Drug Research Monthly Survey

The Center for Substance Abuse Research

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**University of Maryland
College Park, MD**

**CONFIDENTIAL—DO NOT WRITE NAMES
ANYWHERE ON SURVEY**

Volume 1.

CESAR

March, 2005

Thank you for agreeing to become a Student Drug Researcher. This survey should take about 15 minutes to complete.

Please be aware of the following:

- **Answers should be based on observations made around campus; however, feel free to ask friends for their observations as well.**
- **Our primary goal is to get an accurate picture of drug use by University of Maryland, College Park students.**
- **Place the completed survey and yellow address sheet in the provided self-addressed stamped envelope and mail back to CESAR.**
- **Expect \$20 cash payment in the mail two weeks after CESAR receives your completed survey. (see yellow address sheet for instructions)**
- **If there are any questions contact the staff at CESAR at SDR@cesar.umd.edu or (301) 405-9796 for Emy or (301) 405-9792 for Ben.**

1. Availability of Drugs Around Campus- How easy do you think it is for University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) students to get each of the following drugs?

Please Circle One Response

Drug	Very Easy	Easy	Difficult	Very Difficult	Impossible	Don't Know
Alcohol	1	2	3	4	5	6
Ritalin®	1	2	3	4	5	6
Ecstasy (X, MDMA)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Powder Cocaine (excluding crack)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Crack Cocaine	1	2	3	4	5	6
Adderall®	1	2	3	4	5	6
Marijuana	1	2	3	4	5	6
Psychedelic Mushrooms (shrooms)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Ketamine (special K)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Concerta®	1	2	3	4	5	6
Methamphetamine	1	2	3	4	5	6
Kryptonol	1	2	3	4	5	6
Ephedra®	1	2	3	4	5	6
LSD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Rohypnol (roofies)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Vicodin®	1	2	3	4	5	6
Amphetamines (speed)	1	2	3	4	5	6
OxyContin®	1	2	3	4	5	6
Heroin	1	2	3	4	5	6
Steroids	1	2	3	4	5	6
Other Drug Specify: _____	1	2	3	4	5	6
Other Drug Specify: _____	1	2	3	4	5	6
Other Drug Specify: _____	1	2	3	4	5	6

2. New Drug Fads or Trends-

In the space provided, please tell us about any new drug fads or patterns that you have seen or heard about around campus during the last month? List the drug/drugs below and then comment on the following items in addition to anything else you would like to report.
(please print):

Drug : _____

Changes in use: _____

Who/How being used: _____

Other Comments: _____

Drug: _____

Changes in use: _____

Who/How being used: _____

Other Comments: _____

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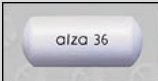

Non-medical Use of Prescription Stimulants

3. How easy do you think it would be for UMCP students to get the following types of prescription stimulants around campus for non-medical use? Circle the corresponding response.

In the last column, list the number of people that you know who have used these types of prescription stimulants non-medically.

“Non-medical use” refers to a person being prescribed a drug but then uses the drug inconsistently with the doctor’s orders, like using too much or too frequently. It also refers to a person who does not have a prescription, but obtains the drug from someone else and then uses the drug.

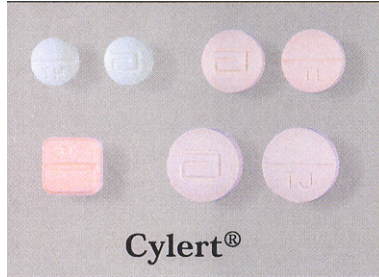
Please Circle One Response

Type of Prescription Stimulant	Very Easy	Easy	Difficult	Very Difficult	Impossible	Don't Know	# of People You Know Who Use
A. Adderall (10mg) 	1	2	3	4	5	6	_____
B. Adderall (XR 10mg) 	1	2	3	4	5	6	_____
C. Dexedrine Spansule 	1	2	3	4	5	6	_____
D. Dexedrine (5mg) 	1	2	3	4	5	6	_____
E. Ritalin (20mg) 	1	2	3	4	5	6	_____
F. Concerta (36mg) 	1	2	3	4	5	6	_____
G. Ritalin-SR 	1	2	3	4	5	6	_____
H. Generic Concerta	1	2	3	4	5	6	_____
I. Other Stimulant Specify: _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	_____
J. Other Stimulant Specify: _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	_____

4. Place a checkmark on the line below each type of prescription stimulant that you have heard about students using around campus non-medically.



1. _____



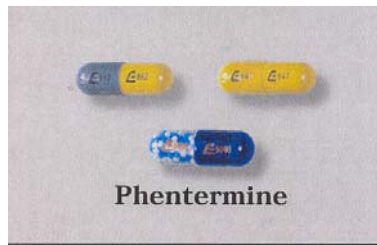
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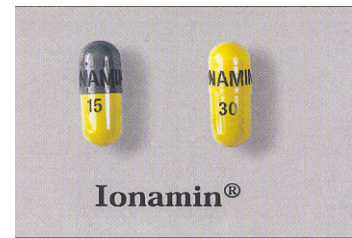
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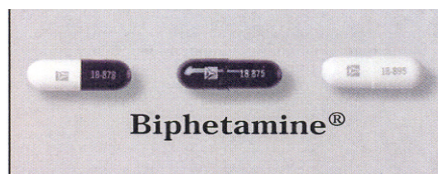
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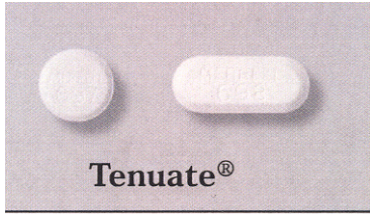
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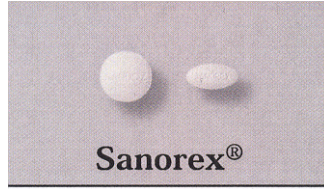
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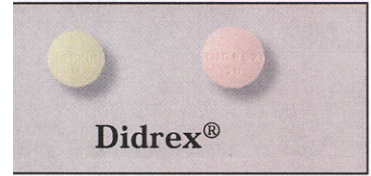
9. _____



10. _____



11. _____



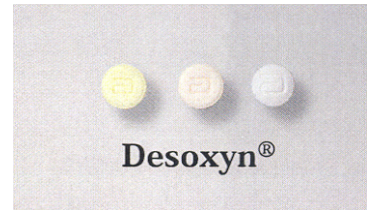
12. _____



13. _____



14. _____



15. _____

5. In the space provided below, please report any other information that you can about students' non-medical use of prescription stimulants. List the type of prescription stimulant below and then comment on any of the following items in addition to anything else you would like to report. (please print):

Type of prescription stimulant: _____

Changes in use: _____

Who/How being used: _____

Other Comments: _____

Type of prescription stimulant: _____

Changes in use: _____

Who/How being used: _____

Other Comments: _____

6. Based on your perceptions of why students use prescriptions stimulants non-medically, rate the following reasons on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being a less common reason for use and 5 being a more common reason for use of prescription stimulants. Circle one response for each reason. If you don't know, indicate by circling 0.

Circle One response for each reason (1 less common → 5 more common reasons for use)

Reason for Using Prescription Stimulants Non-Medically	Don't Know	Less Common	→	→	→	More Common
A. Help wake up in the morning	0	1	2	3	4	5
B. Reduce anxiety	0	1	2	3	4	5
C. Get excited/ "up" for a sporting event	0	1	2	3	4	5
D. Get excited/ "up" for a party	0	1	2	3	4	5
E. Help studying in general (not including cramming)	0	1	2	3	4	5
F. Help cram for test	0	1	2	3	4	5
G. Take right before a test to help focus while taking the exam	0	1	2	3	4	5
H. Increase the effects of other drugs	0	1	2	3	4	5
I. Increase the effects of alcohol	0	1	2	3	4	5
J. Reduce inhibitions	0	1	2	3	4	5
K. Stay awake to party longer (not including drinking)	0	1	2	3	4	5
L. Stay awake to drink longer	0	1	2	3	4	5
M. Promote sexual activity	0	1	2	3	4	5
N. Perform better in athletics	0	1	2	3	4	5
O. To deal with depression	0	1	2	3	4	5
P. To lose weight	0	1	2	3	4	5

List here any other reasons you think students use prescription stimulants non-medically:

Additional information-

7. In the space provided, please tell us anything else you would like to report about emerging drugs, changes in use or drug use in general around campus. (please print):

8. We are interested in your thoughts about this survey. Please tell us things you liked or disliked and provide any suggestions for things you would like to see on future questionnaires. (please print):

Feel free to use the back of this page or add pages if you need more space

ONCE COMPLETED, PLEASE PLACE THIS SURVEY IN THE PROVIDED SELF-ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE AND MAIL BACK TO CESAR. SEE PAGE 2 FOR INSTRUCTIONS ON RECEIVING YOUR \$20 CASH INCENTIVE. AGAIN, WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION AND EXPECT THE NEXT SURVEY NEAR THE END OF APRIL.