
STEROIDS FOR SMARTIES

Guy Guenthner is a junior in the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences majoring in Biology and minoring in Medical Humanities, Health, and Culture. Guy's featured piece is his first to be published in the Medical Humanities Journal, and was originally written for Professor Amy Boesky's "Introduction to Medical Humanities" course. His writing was inspired by the prevalence of Adderall use during final exam periods at Boston College. Guy hopes his work will prompt students and faculty to reflect on and acknowledge a problem our community is currently facing.

A finals week of stressful library hours looms ahead for John Smith. Organic Chem on Monday, Cell Bio on Tuesday, two papers due Thursday, and yet, John isn't worried. He is confident he can pull a couple all nighters and cram it all in. How can he be so calm you ask? The conversation went something like this.

"Hey man, your roommate has a Addy prescription right? Yea? Awesome, can I get two 25s from you? 10 bucks? Sweet, I'll stop by later."

The only hypothetical part of this story is the name. Every finals period, I overhear similar conversations in nearly every class, dining hall, and library. Students talking to that one friend who has an Adderall prescription and is willing to sell them some so they can cram for their big exams. The use of "Addy" as a "study drug" is growing out of control at universities countrywide. Worse, however, is the lack of acknowledgement of abuse of a prescription amphetamine by the students themselves and the rest of society. It's time for students and universities to stop shrugging their shoulders about Adderall abuse.

Adderall was developed to counteract the symptoms of at-

tention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). ADHD diagnoses have risen recently as multiple prescription drugs have been developed to counteract its effects. According to the CDC, about 11% of people from ages 4-17 are diagnosed with ADHD, and yet, 1 in 5 American college students report using Adderall without a diagnosis. With some quick math applied, nearly more people are abusing Adderall than taking it for an actual diagnosis.

The blame for Adderall abuse is hard to distinguish. It is natural to point a finger at the student taking Adderall to study, but what about the student selling his or her prescription drug? These student "dealers" have either faked an illness or are tossing aside an actual learning disability to make some side cash. Further, by repeatedly filling prescriptions, students throw away their parents' well-deserved insurance plan money. These students take advantage of other students' desire to excel and raise grades at the expense of their health.

The pointed finger could be turned toward the educational system. From the minute a student enters college, the competitiveness of the real world starts to set in. Students are stressed to excel and believe the consequence of failure

is judgment from peers, future employers, and even their parents. We cannot, however, place the entire blame on a system only responding to its participants. The educational system is becoming more competitive because students are working harder and striving for more.

In the end, the finger comes back around to the abuser of Adderall. It's an individual's choice to ingest an amphetamine that can block out distractions and increase productivity. A student always has the choice to deny a drug in front of them, but the temptation of results persists. The fact of the matter is the blame cannot rest on anyone's shoulders solely. Adderall is at every university in the country and is consumed by an alarming amount of bright students. So what's next?

The first step is acknowledging the problem. Our culture ostracizes athletes using performance-enhancing drugs to excel in their sports, and yet we turn a blind eye to college kids

taking supplements to excel in studies. Non-prescription based Adderall use must be negatively stigmatized by our culture and by students. It's not enough to say, "Well if I don't do it, I don't care if they do."

Students must also be informed of the nature of the drug and its side effects. Many college students, even here at BC, would not consider the illicit use of Adderall as dangerous, yet it is listed as a Schedule II substance by the DEA, right next to cocaine, meth, and morphine on addictive quality.

Prescription drug abuse is a large problem in the U.S. and Adderall abuse should be no different. Hard working students shouldn't have to feel at a disadvantage because they don't take a drug to focus. Drugs are constantly being produced to solve problems, but intelligence does not need fixing. College must and should always be an equal playing field devoted to success through hard work, not drug use.