



College Students' Abuse of Prescription Drugs is Rising

Prescription drug abuse among students in U.S. colleges and universities has been rising for several years.

The 2006 Survey of College Students estimated that 7.4% of young people have used the painkiller hydrocodone without a prescription in that year. Use for this drug is up from 6.9% in 2004, with similar increases for other opioid medications, stimulants, and sedatives.

Prescription Abuse Widespread

The Harvard University Alcohol Study in 2001 surveyed 10,904 randomly selected students enrolled at colleges across the United States. **Overall, 4% of the respondents reported having taken a stimulant medication without a prescription at least once during the previous year.** Men were twice as likely as women (5.8% versus 2.9%) to have abused Ritalin, Dexedrine and Amphetamine.

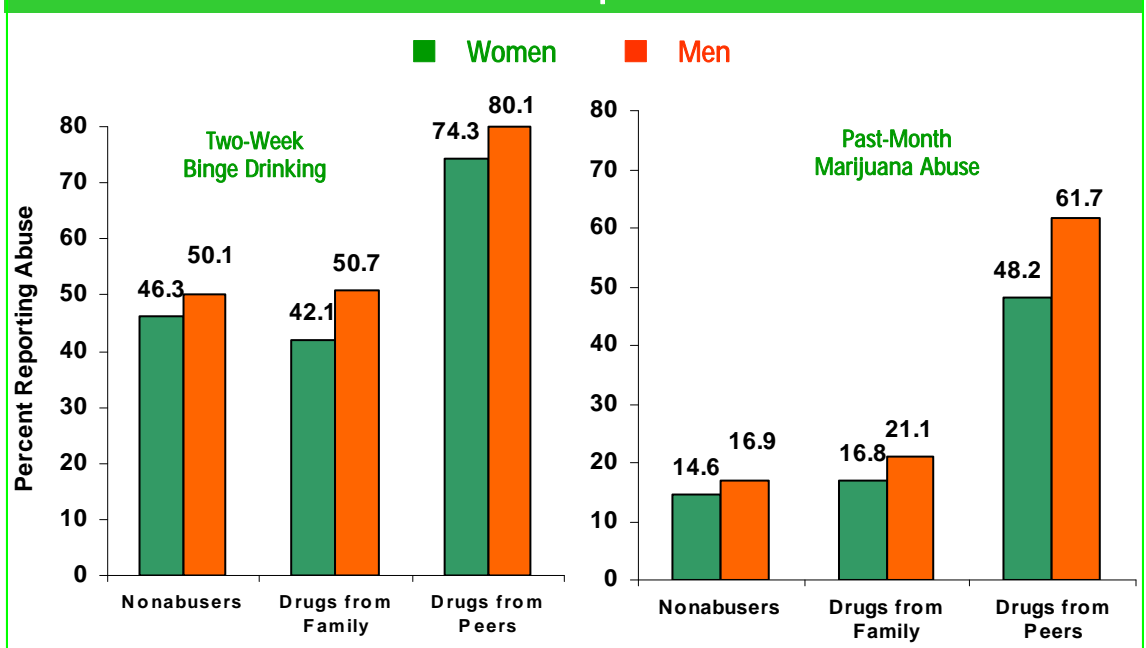
Stimulant medication abuse was also more prevalent among students who were:

- White (4.9% versus 1.6% for African-Americans and 1.3% for Asians)
- Members of fraternities or sororities (8.6% versus 3.5% for nonmembers).
- Earning lower grades (5.2% for grade point average of B or lower versus 3.3% for B+ or higher).

Students who abuse prescription stimulants report higher levels of cigarette smoking; heavy drinking; risky driving and abuse of marijuana, MDMA (Ecstasy), and cocaine.

Students attending colleges in the Northeast, schools with more competitive standards, and non-commuter schools reported higher rates of abuse. Fraternity and sorority members showed greater binge drinking and marijuana abuse compared with non-members.

Student Prescription Abuse



Summary

Exposure to prescription pain medication early in life increases the likelihood of abuse in college.

Women who had received prescriptions for pain relievers were more than four times as likely as those with no prescribed use to report abuse in the past year. Men with early prescribed use were twice as likely as those without to report such abuse.

The picture that frequently emerges is one of students who are already heavy drinkers when they come to college selected fraternities and sororities with a reputation for "partying".

As members of these organizations, they further increased their drinking in an environment that supports the behavior.

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