

Popping pills for stress ills: a deadly match made in college campus heaven

Have trouble concentrating? Can't seem to balance schoolwork with your social life? There's a pill for that.

While Guilford College students are well-known for marijuana use, prescription drug abuse is an equally major problem.



BY SHELBY SMITH
STAFF WRITER

The prescription drugs typically used are stimulants like Adderall, Concerta, Strattera and Ritalin.

"It's a huge problem at Guilford," said junior Noelle Lane. "A lot of kids in high school and college abuse ADD medication. People who

take them think they help to study, party and stay awake."

The prevalence of prescription drug abuse in the U.S. has risen in recent years.

"They're just easy to get," said an anonymous student. "And they're not illegal, so you won't get into much trouble if you get caught with them. Just say they're yours."

It is typically believed amongst young people that prescription drugs are not as dangerous as street drugs. However, they can be just as dangerous, if not more harmful.

Of the deaths caused by drugs amongst young people, 45 percent are caused by prescription drugs versus the 39 percent caused by street drugs like cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin and others.

Also, according to Oregon State University



LISA ROBINSON/GUILFORDIAN

Student Health Services, stimulant abuse's health effects include psychological dependence, changes in weight and sleep, paranoia, delusions and depression.

Why do students risk these side effects for the sake of extra energy and concentration?

The real question is, why not?

The world college students live in and will eventually enter after graduation is an exceedingly stressful one. There is pressure to be fully developed in our ideas of the world, what we want to do with our lives and who we think we are.

Individuals in their late teens and early

twenties are not in a position to perform like established adults while still maintaining a social life and extracurricular activities.

We need an edge, and sometimes even the most well-informed individuals can't resist the shiny, A-plus allure.

There have been times where I've looked at my own psychiatric medication thinking, "You know, a couple more of these in my system will really help me get these papers done."

The temptation is massive despite knowing what harm it could do to me. Prescription drug abuse is the quick,

accessible edge we need to perform.

But what is the cost of performance?

With consistent use of stimulants, there is bound to be a crash. The longer the crash is delayed, the harder it will be. After the crash, the idea that tolerance for the medication will build up often causes individuals to take more of the medication.

However, tolerance does not work the same way in which street drugs do. This perception can lead to overdosing and even death.

"A lot of people in my hometown have died from (overdoses)," said Lane.

With all of these facts in mind, how do we deal with this problem?

First, we need to start talking about it. Statistics of this problem at Guilford have yet to be fully recorded. This data is crucial in order to give the issue the attention it deserves.

Next, students who abuse prescription drugs need to come forth with their problems. The Student Counseling Center provides support for substance abuse through both individual and group counseling.

Finally, the hard one: colleges need to relieve some pressure.

We are not lumps of coal. We will not turn into diamonds under extreme pressure. We will turn to mush.

This solution is the most difficult as it requires a complete restructuring of how work is given at colleges, how classes are structured and how work is distributed. It will ultimately take the effort of both students and college faculty and administration to come to a solution.

And there's no pill for that.

Queer representation on TV better, still has growing pains

"Her name is Naomi," said Emily in an episode of "Skins," the popular TV show. "She's rather beautiful, so I'm nailing her." In one of the best coming-out moments in television history, Emily's bold statement told viewers that coming out doesn't have to be a traumatic experience.



BY OLIVIA NEAL
STAFF WRITER

In recent years, as the LGBTQA community has become more widely accepted, TV has gotten better at reflecting its progress. But while strides have been made, modern shows could do more.

"Family Guy" makes a gay joke at least once per episode, and while the writers may try to defend it

because they make fun of everyone, the stereotypes are hurtful. In an era where kids are looking to television for guidance, they should be given support and hope, not ridiculed.

Also, while a lot of the shows currently airing have a myriad of great gay and questioning characters, there's a significantly lower number of bisexual and transgender ones.

This needs to change, because for marginalized teens that fall under these categories, it's damaging to see a lack of representation even in the most inclusive shows.

Recently, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation released its annual report on LGBTQA television representation. Each year, the report serves to announce which stations and which shows are doing well and which need improvement.

"TV hasn't merely reflected the changes in social attitudes; it has also had an important role in bringing them about," said

the report. "Time and again, it's been shown that personally knowing an LGBT person is one of the most influential factors in shifting one's views on LGBT issues, but in the absence of that, many viewers have first gotten to know us as television characters."

Queer representation on mainstream television is important. Media should reflect society, not the other way around.

Recent shows have included more gay characters in their main lineup. "Teen Wolf" has gay werewolves, "Glee"

has gay drama geeks, and "Orange is the New Black" has gay prisoners. But what really counts is the quality of the representation.

There are some shows that do it right. "Glee" portrays the struggles of being transgender and trying to find oneself, and Miss Hudson of "Elementary" isn't defined by her female gender identity. "Lost Girl" has a well-portrayed bisexual character with meaningful relationships with both men and women, breaking many stereotypes.

However, even with this progress, the shows with harmful stereotypes outnumber the quality ones.

It's easy to improve on this. Add more bisexual characters, add more lesbians, add gratifying emotional relationships for people of all gender identities and sexual orientations.

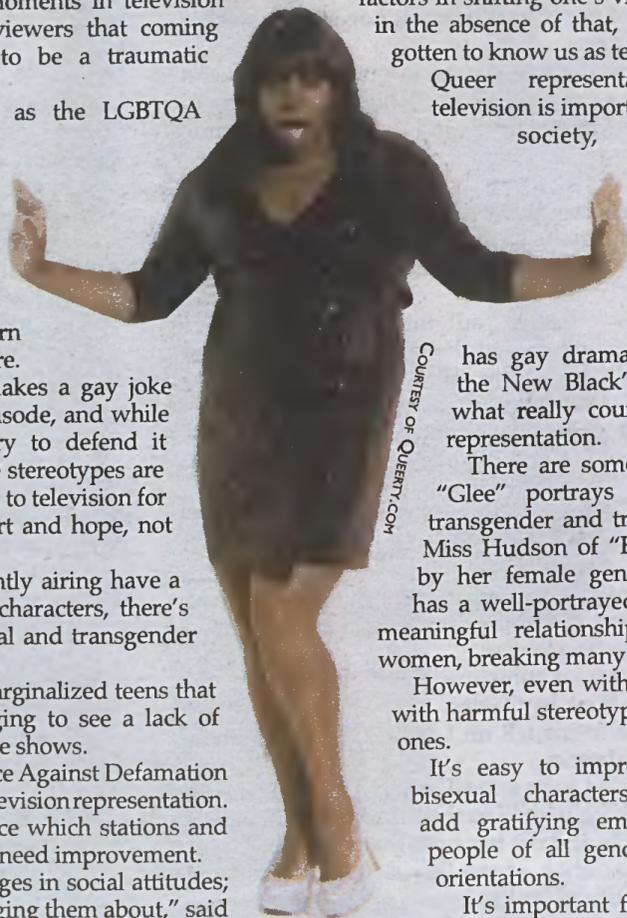
It's important for shows to have proper

LGBTQA representation because it's a good way to educate people on the challenging social issues of our time, and it shows how the world really works. Queer people exist, and keeping them out of TV is just as harmful as telling them, "You don't belong."

"(This is) a time when an acknowledgement of homosexuality has entered all aspects of popular culture, when diversity and acceptance are the words of the day but by no means entirely the deeds," said the editors of Entertainment Weekly in 1997 when Ellen DeGeneres won Entertainer of the Year.

Our culture is growing and changing, and TV should celebrate that. So if you're thinking about writing for a television show, add some characters who aren't straight, and make them quality characters.

Everyone deserves to see themselves in a well-written television character.



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Unique of "Glee" (left) and Bo of "Lost Girl" (above) positively represent queer people in television.

To see a list of the top 10 best Queered shows, go to: WWW.GUILFORDIAN.COM