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adderall abuse

“He didn’t verify anything,” she says. “He gave me a ton of Adderall—over 90 capsules at a time. It was a really ridiculous amount, and I saved them all up.”

Soon Bianca found herself in a dangerous cycle: a pill in the morning would prevent her from sleeping at night, and she found the only way to avoid being tired the day after was to take more Adderall. When she came to Harvard, she brought a stash of more than 100 pills with her.

She stopped taking them after her boyfriend threatened to end their relationship if she continued.

“There are days when taking Adderall would be a smart choice for that day, when it really would make me so much more productive, but I think for me it has been a really good decision not to take it,” she says now.

Bianca sold her remaining pills for \$250 to a fellow freshman—Jessica.

“It’s not something I use all the time, but it’s there for me to fall back on,” Jessica says.

SIDE EFFECTS MAY INCLUDE

“There is a prevailing notion that since doctors prescribe medications such as Adderall, that they must be safe,” University Health Services spokesperson Nanci Martin writes in an e-mailed statement. But despite this perception, Martin writes that stimulants like Adderall can cause cardiac problems.

Harvard Drug and Alcohol Peer Advisors outline further risks of stimulants like Adderall on their website—including addiction, stroke, psychosis, and schizophrenia.

But labels and doctor warnings fail to prevent some students from popping pills. Though statistics on Adderall misuse vary widely, studies show that prescription drug abuse occurs on campuses across the country.

The 2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that 6.4 percent of full-time college students age 18 to 22 misused Adderall that year. The number did not include students diagnosed with an attention deficit disorder, even though experts claim that some students fake symptoms in order to get study pills.

Closer to home, a 2011 survey by the Boston Globe found that among an “informal sampling” of students at four Boston-area colleges, 15 percent admitted to taking prescription drugs, most frequently Adderall, for stress relief, increased focus, and other unintended purposes.

Peter, a junior whose name has been changed, worries that doctors might discover long-term effects in the future, even though his occasional use of Adderall has not

produced any immediate side effects.

“There is no way you can take a drug to make your brain work at twice the speed and intensity as normal without having some consequences,” he says.

THIS IS YOUR BRAIN ON ADDERALL

Despite concerns about Adderall abuse, Stanford law professor Henry Greely argues that using prescription drugs to boost studying should be as commonly accepted as drinking caffeine.

Greely and his six co-authors said in a 2008 article in *Nature* that study pills like Adderall have “much to offer individuals and society.”

The article counters critics of study pills who charge that they are “unnatural” by pointing out that nearly every aspect of modern life—food, shelter, clothing, medical care—bears “little relation to our species’ ‘natural’ state.”

These drugs “should be viewed in the same general category as education, good health habits, and information technology—ways that our uniquely innovative species tries to improve itself,” says the article.

Peter disagrees. Even though he uses study pills to increase concentration, he admits that their use on college campuses gives students unfair advantages.

“Adderall is absolutely cheating,” he says. “Coffee and other natural stimulants keep you awake, but Adderall keeps you focused. I read an entire course’s assigned reading in a five-hour period. That is not natural. That was cheating.”

Jessica has a different take. “I don’t think it’s cheating to take study drugs,” she says. “But I do admit that I sometimes get annoyed with people who fake a prescription. They get extra time on tests, and I think a lot of people get prescribed Adderall knowing full well they do not have ADD.”

As Jessica knows from first-hand experience, Adderall’s power to increase focus comes at a mental as well as physical cost. The drug is known to impair creativity and alter thought patterns.

“The papers I write on Adderall are nowhere near the same quality as the ones I write not on Adderall,” she says. “They are wordy and convoluted. It’s like I can’t step back and see the big picture, but at the time it feels like I’m writing smart stuff.”

Yet time-crunched students juggling competitive classes, leadership positions, job and graduate school applications, and social lives turn to study pills for an extra edge anyway.

As Jessica puts it, “desperate times call for desperate measures.”

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SGA

tant Dean of Students Megan Walters, who helped facilitate the election process, ensuring the voting went smoothly and helped in the final counting of ballots.

Elections at Brevard College were not always this way. Just three or four years ago, elections typically took place over several days, with guarantees of secret ballots by candidates, preservation of voter integrity (i.e., making sure each student voted only once), and ample opportunities for voters to learn more about candidates in *The Clarion*, in candidate forums, and other informal meetings with candidates.

And the number of students who voted then regularly exceeded 400 students, 60 percent or more of the student body, according to Travis Wireback, SGA president 2008-2009 and editor in chief of *The Clarion* in 2009-2010.

Compare that number to this year’s tally of 242 votes in a single day, which includes, according to Matthews, only 21 commuting students. Assuming a conservative estimate of 600 eligible voters, that is a voter turnout of only 40 percent.

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All correspondence should be mailed to:
The Clarion, Brevard College, One Brevard College Drive, Brevard, NC 28712, or send E-mail to clarion@brevard.edu
www.brevard.edu/clarion

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