

Mismatched numbers: What parents think, and what is actually true in 'study drugs' abuse among teens

By ACSH Staff — May 23, 2013

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[1]Crunch time during final exams may tempt some teens nationwide to use a study drug, a prescription stimulant- to enhance academic performance. Shocking? Not to most. But perhaps more surprising is a [new University of Michigan poll](#) [2] that shows that, while about one in ten high school students admit to doing so, only one in 100 parents of teens 13-17 years old believe that their teen has used a study drug.

Prescription drugs like Adderall, Ritalin/Concerta, and Vyvanse are typically prescribed to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and although not proven to boost grades, students without ADHD use the drugs in the belief that these drugs will help them to stay focused and improve their test scores.

Among parents of teens who do not have prescribed medications to treat ADHD, only 1 percent said they believe their teen has used a study drug to help their academic performance, according to the latest University of Michigan Mott Children s Hospital National Poll on Children s Health. But the results differ from recent national data from Monitoring the Future which indicate that, in fact, 10 percent of high school sophomores and 12 percent of high school seniors admit they ve used a stimulant medication not prescribed by their doctor.

What we found in this poll is a clear mismatch between what parents believe and what their kids are reporting, says Matthew M. Davis, MD, M.A.P.P., director of the C.S. Mott Children s Hospital National Poll on Children s Health. But even though parents may not be recognizing these behaviors in their own kids, this poll also showed that one-half of the parents say they are very concerned about this abuse in their communities, Davis adds.

While more than half of parents polled admitted their concerns over drug abuse, only 27 percent of parents said they ve taken steps to talk to their teens about study drugs.

ACSH s Dr. Gilbert Ross noted, Behind the numbers lie a series of issues: how many of the students diagnosed with ADHD actually have ADHD (let s not forget that a substantial number of youngsters with mental and psychological problems do not seek medical attention or treatment); how do teens get the study drugs without a prescription; how many parents condone (or are even complicit in getting) such performance-enhancing drugs in the belief that it will elevate their kids grades and status; and finally, how little do parents know about teens sharing the drugs with other students, and why don t parents talk to their children about such issues.

ACSH s Dr. Josh Bloom, adds, "At some point everybody has trouble concentrating, so the real question is, Do we really want to be giving chemical aids to otherwise normal students to enable

them to get higher test scores to get into better schools? And what does this mean for students who are not taking the drugs? It's very much the same question as athletes who use performance enhancing drugs in sports cheating works, assuming you don't get caught.

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[1] <http://hsdispatch.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/165486351.jpg>

[2] <http://www.sacbee.com/2013/05/20/5434102/one-in-ten-teens-using-study-drugs.html>