Prescription drug abuse is the nation’s fastest growing drug problem. More people in the US died last year of drug overdoses than died in car accidents, making prescription drug abuse the third leading cause of accidental death.

This epidemic has been particularly widespread on college campuses. Between 1993 and 2005, the proportion of college students using prescription drugs went up dramatically: use of opioids such as Vicodin, Oxycontin, and Percocet increased by 343 percent, and use of stimulants like Ritalin or Adderall increased by 93 percent.

Because the tragedy disproportionately affects college students, the Clinton Foundation launched a campaign to ask college newspapers to join us in raising awareness about prescription drug misuse.
Campus publications from across the country ran feature pieces, op-eds, and editorials about this important issue. As the excerpts below demonstrate, despite the many differences between the schools—size, location, demographics—they all found that prescription drug use is on the rise.

- See more at: https://www.clintonfoundation.org/blog/2014/01/12/rising-epidemic-college-campuses-prescription-drug-abuse#sthash.SB35uPIY.dpuf

According to research published in the journal Addictive Behaviors, 50 percent of college students are offered a prescription drug for nonmedical purposes by their sophomore year. Prescription painkillers, or opioids, are rapidly becoming the drug of choice — 12 percent of college students report having misused a prescription opioid in their lifetime. Studies suggest that abuse of prescription opioids is most prevalent among highly selective urban colleges in the Northeast. Does that kind of school sound familiar? - See more at: https://www.clintonfoundation.org/blog/2014/01/12/rising-epidemic-college-campuses-prescription-drug-abuse#sthash.SB35uPIY.dpuf

Studying with stimulants

BY SAMFORD CRIMSON IN OPINION · DECEMBER 4, 2013 · NO COMMENTS

SEAN ALTENDORF – Guest Columnist

We all know that college is full of stressors like papers, projects and tests. Most of us manage our time and pull an occasional all-nighter to get a good enough grade so we don’t disappoint our parents. But some people take a different approach to the traditional college experience. They use, or sometimes abuse, prescription stimulants like Adderall, Ritalin or Vyvanse.

Don’t get me wrong. I understand that attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is a legitimate medical issue that requires treatment. But problems occur when children with ADHD enter college. In the dorms and group study sessions, anecdotal stories of stimulants being “performance enhancers,” “smart drugs” or “grade boosters” arise. These stories are passed along and become accepted belief.

If I polled a class of a hundred students on whether or not they like studying, I’d get one raised hand from the oddball in the corner. The fact of the matter is that no one wants to study and everyone wants to succeed. Therein lies the draw of prescription stimulant use.

And these drugs are readily available. According to an article in the Journal of Addictive Diseases, a study of 81 college students with ADHD revealed that an alarming 62 percent diverted the medication to someone without a prescription. The legality of medication diversion is rarely discussed during these transactions.

The adverse effects of these medications aren’t told either. Prescription stimulant users can experience anxiety, depression, loss of appetite, insomnia, seizures and more. These medicines are potentially dangerous and require the attention of a qualified physician.

Prescription stimulants should only be used by those with a true need and not by individuals looking for an easy way out of studying for a big test.

The good news is that there are alternatives to medications for students who want to get an A on this semester’s finals.

Treat the underlying causes of distraction. Learn what behaviors and environments lend themselves toward your academic success. Most importantly, make time to study.

You shouldn’t be taking prescription stimulant drugs unless you have a documented medical condition. Not only can they be dangerous, but it is illegal to take them without a prescription. There are many ways to study and succeed in school. You really don’t want that little incident in college to prevent you from getting your dream job.

Sean Altendorf is a second year pharmacy student. Email him at saltendo@samford.edu.
Students without prescriptions also said it is not difficult to acquire the pills.

Taylor Bentley, a senior strategic communication major, said a lot of her friends use ADD drugs. “I would say 50 percent of my friends take it,” she said.

She said her friends take the drugs primarily to help them study, but that some of them have also taken it recreationally on occasion.

- See more at: https://www.clintonfoundation.org/blog/2014/01/12/rising-epidemic-college-campuses-prescription-drug-abuse#sthash.UE5jRTDA.dpuf

About The Clinton Health Matters Initiative

The Clinton Health Matters Initiative (CHMI) works to improve the health and well-being of all people by activating individuals, communities, and organizations to make meaningful contributions to the health of others.

- See more at: https://www.clintonfoundation.org/blog/2014/01/12/rising-epidemic-college-campuses-prescription-drug-abuse#sthash.UE5jRTDA.dpuf

Nearly Half of All College Students Face These Challenges

There are two overlooked national health issues that are affecting college campuses across the country. and they are contributing to the leading causes of death for college students in the US. Yet not enough people are talking about it: mental health issues and substance abuse and misuse among college students and young adults.

These are serious preventable problems affecting many young adults across the U.S.:

- Almost 1 in 4 of the nation’s college students meets the medical criteria for substance abuse.
Mental health and substance abuse issues affect every single college campus.

According to the 2013 American College Health Association–National College Health Assessment, more than half of college students have experienced "overwhelming anxiety"; about 32% of these students reported feeling "so depressed that it was difficult to function" at some point in the past year.

**The Campus Program is designed to help colleges and universities promote emotional wellbeing and improve mental health programming, reduce substance abuse, and prevent suicide.**

That is why we are breaking the silence. The Clinton Foundation’s Health Matters Initiative (CHMI) has teamed up with The Jed Foundation to launch The Jed and Clinton Health Matters Campus Program (The Campus Program), which helps colleges and universities create healthier and safer campus environments. The Campus Program is designed to help colleges and universities promote emotional wellbeing and improve mental health programming, reduce substance abuse, and prevent suicide. The Campus Program expands upon The Jed Foundation’s JedCampus program, a groundbreaking self-assessment and feedback program that helps colleges create more comprehensive solutions to support their students.

To participate in the Campus Program, schools take a confidential, online self-assessment about their current mental health, suicide prevention, and substance abuse programming, which is then compared to recommended practices. The Jed Foundation and CHMI then provide a confidential feedback report and on-the-ground technical assistance with practical recommendations for enhancement.

**We all need to work together to support America’s 21 million college and university students.**

These are serious issues that need to be addressed. We all need to work together to support America’s 21 million college and university students. By breaking the silence, we can begin a dialog to help ensure that our young adults are able to reach their full potential by improving mental health, substance abuse, and suicide prevention programming on campuses, and letting them know that help and support are available. We need everyone’s efforts to reverse this epidemic. Join us
While alcohol abuse and binge drinking still top the list of substance abuse issues on college campuses, the non-medical use of prescription drugs—most notably stimulants, sedatives and pain relievers—is a growing, yet unaddressed problem (SAMHSA, 2009; NCASA, 2007). In fact, about one in four college students has illegally used prescription drugs, and many more have been offered these medications by friends or fellow students. Many students may not even realize that they, their roommate, teammate or friend are misusing or abusing these medications, most of which are controlled substances and, therefore, illegal to use without a prescription. When used the right way and under a doctor’s supervision, prescription drugs are safe and effective in treating countless medical conditions. But taking these medications the wrong way or without a prescription puts young lives at risk (SAMHSA, 2009a).

Consider these facts:

- Although most college students use prescription drugs properly, about one in four people aged 18 to 20 report using these medications non-medically at least once in their lives (NSDUH, 2008).

- Non-medical use of pain relievers is on the rise among college-age youth (SAMHSA, 2009a). This age group also has the highest prevalence rate of non-medical use of prescription opioids in the US (McCabe et al, 2007).

- College students misuse prescription stimulants to “get in the zone” or pull all night study sessions—a habit that is most likely to begin in college (Teter et al, 2006). Among people 18 to 22 years of age, full-time college students are twice as likely to use a stimulant for nonmedical reasons in the past year compared to those who aren’t in college or are only part-time students (SAMHSAb, 2009).

- By students’ sophomore year in college, about half of their classmates will have been offered the opportunity to abuse a prescription drug (Arria, 2008).

Taking prescription medications inappropriately has also been linked to other high risk, unhealthy behaviors. Most college students (90%) who used Adderall (a medication used to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and narcolepsy) non-medically in the past year were also binge drinkers and more than half were heavy alcohol users (SAMHSA, 2009b). These students were almost three times as likely as those who had not used Adderall non-medically to have used marijuana in the past year, eight times more likely to have used cocaine or be non-medical users of prescription tranquilizers and five times more likely to have been non-medical users of prescription pain relievers (SAMHSA, 2009b)

A Slippery Slope: the Dangers of Prescription Drug Abuse Many students mistakenly believe prescription medications are safe because they are FDA approved and prescribed by a doctor. But all medications have risks; and they are only safe
when taken as directed by the person for whom they were prescribed. Misusing or abusing prescription medications is dangerous. It can jeopardize a person's future and lead to long-term health problems. Abusing prescription medications can lead to:

- Increases in blood pressure or heart rate
- Organ damage
- Addiction
- Difficulty breathing
- Seizures
- Heart Attack
- Stroke
- Death