

Enhancing Academic Performance via Prescription Medications

Just as steroids have been permeating the culture of baseball for some time now, prescription drugs such as Adderall and Ritalin have begun to permeate high school and college campuses. Some argue that as a result of widespread use, students face increased pressure to use these medications in order to stay competitive with their peers and set themselves up well for college, graduate school, or the workforce.

“Adderall was passed around like candy before tests, exams and the SAT,” said one former North Carolina high school student. “The majority of my friends have bought or sold Adderall for these purposes.”

Medications like Adderall and Ritalin are usually prescribed to treat Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Many students use these medications regularly to address their ADD or ADHD, not simply to stay up all night to meet a deadline. But some high school and college users of these medications do not have a prescription and were given the pills by friends or purchased them on the black market.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Under what conditions, if any, is it morally permissible to consume Adderall, Ritalin, etc., for the purposes of increasing performance?
2. Is there a relevant moral difference between taking these medications with a prescription and taking these medications without a prescription, assuming that each party uses the medicine for similar ends (studying, taking an exam, etc.)?