

TEENS NOT AT RISK OF THE COLUMBIAN DRUG CARTEL BUT WIDELY PRESCRIBED AND ABUSED PSYCHIATRIC DRUGS Stimulants and Psychoactive Meds Are Now Gateway Drugs

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse's study, "Wasting the Best and the Brightest: Substance Abuse at America's Colleges and Universities," released this week, shows that students today are more at risk of legally prescribed psychotropic drugs than those pushed by the Columbian drug cartel. While marijuana use is up 110% and illicit use of cocaine and heroin up 52% since 1993, the greatest risk today is prescription drugs, with the growing rate of abuse greater than that for marijuana, cocaine and heroin. Between 1993 and 2005, there was a 450% increase in students abusing tranquilizers, a 225% increase in barbiturates abuse and a 93% increase in stimulant abuse. Stimulants such as Ritalin and Adderall are prescribed for treatment of "Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder" (ADHD) but sell on the black market for anywhere between \$5 and \$10 a pill.

The Citizens Commission on Human Rights, a psychiatric watchdog group, says that a national investigation is needed into the relationship of increasing numbers of children being prescribed psychoactive drugs and illicit drug abuse. NCASA's study, it says, fails to investigate this link.

Since 1995, the United Nations International Narcotics Control Board has warned about Ritalin abuse in the U.S. and says the nation accounts for 90% of the world consumption of the stimulant. On March 1 this year, the Board issued a report stating that the abuse of painkillers, stimulants, and tranquilizers in the U.S. has gone beyond "practically all illicit drugs with the exception of cannabis," with users increasingly turning to them *first*.

Dr. Sonja Muhammed, executive director of the non-profit child and family counseling center in California, Altitutes for Excellence, says, "We're looking at marijuana and other things as being gateway drugs. And actually, the so-called [stimulant, prescribed] medications are a greater gateway drug."

In fact, studies show that pediatric use of "ADHD" stimulants can predispose the child to later cocaine abuse. In 1999, Nadine Lambert, director of the School Psychology Program at the Graduate School of Education, UC Berkley conducted a decades-long study on nearly 500 San Francisco Bay area children that "provided evidence that childhood use of CNS [central nervous system] stimulant treatment is significantly and pervasively implicated in cocaine dependence, in the uptake of regular smoking and in daily smoking in adulthood, as well as in the lifetime use of stimulants and cocaine."

Despite increasing international warnings on the potentially fatal risks of psychiatric drugs, they are prescribed to children to treat "mental disorders" for which there is no objective, scientific test to substantiate them, such as blood tests, brain scans or X-rays. The FDA has warned that stimulants can cause heart attack, stroke and sudden death. College students abusing the drugs could also be at risk of this. For more information about the dangers of psychiatric drugs, read the [Report on the Escalating International Warnings on Psychiatric Drugs](#) by the Citizens Commission on Human Rights.