

## **Diversion of medically prescribed stimulants and analgesics by college students**

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**Aims:** While several studies document nonmedical use of prescription drugs among young adults, few examine the prevalence of prescription medication diversion among college students. This study, using data from the College Life Study, a longitudinal prospective study of 1253 college students, had two aims. First, we report the prevalence and frequency of diversion (i.e., sharing and/or selling) among 83 college students who were prescribed an ADHD medication and 291 students prescribed an analgesic (for pain and other conditions). Second, we examine the characteristics of students who diverted these prescription medications.

**Methods:** The study sample consisted of students attending a public university in the mid-Atlantic region of the US who were between 17 and 19 at the start of the study. The 24-month follow-up interview contained detailed questions about diversion of prescription medications. Additional information was gathered regarding a wide variety of other variables, including demographics and childhood conduct problems.

**Results:** Among 83 students prescribed an ADHD medication, 59% reported either sharing (54%) and/or selling (30%) their prescription with someone else in their lifetime. The most commonly diverted ADHD medication was amphetamine-dextroamphetamine, where 70% of the 44 students with a prescription diverted it at least once. Diversion of prescription analgesics was less common, with 31% of students either sharing (27%) and/or selling (6%) their prescription. Oxycodone was the most commonly diverted analgesic, with 100% of the 19 students with a prescription diverting it at least once. Comparative analyses revealed that prescription diverters were more likely to live off campus and to have exhibited three or more childhood conduct problems than students who did not divert their prescription.

**Conclusion:** Prevention initiatives for college populations should focus on the legal and health risks of diverting prescription medications.

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