

NON-MEDICAL USE OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS AMONG MISSOURI COLLEGE STUDENTS

Partners in Prevention (PIP) is Missouri's higher education substance abuse consortium dedicated to creating healthy and safe college campuses. The coalition is comprised of 21 public and private colleges and universities in Missouri. Campus conduct officials, law enforcement, and campus prevention professionals take part in local coalitions and the statewide PIP coalition. The unique composition brings together different perspectives on prevention efforts.

Statewide Non-Medical Use of Prescription Drugs

According to the Missouri Department of Mental Health, drug-related deaths have risen in the state due to increased use of heroin and prescription pain medication among young adults (2011). Missouri data from the National Household Survey, identifies the college-age group (18 to 25 years) accounting for the highest prevalence of non-medical prescription drug use. Twelve percent (12%) of 18 to 25 year olds reported non-medical prescription drug use, compared to 6% for those 12-17 years old and 3% for adults older than 26 years (SAMHSA, 2011).

College Non-Medical Use of Prescription Drugs

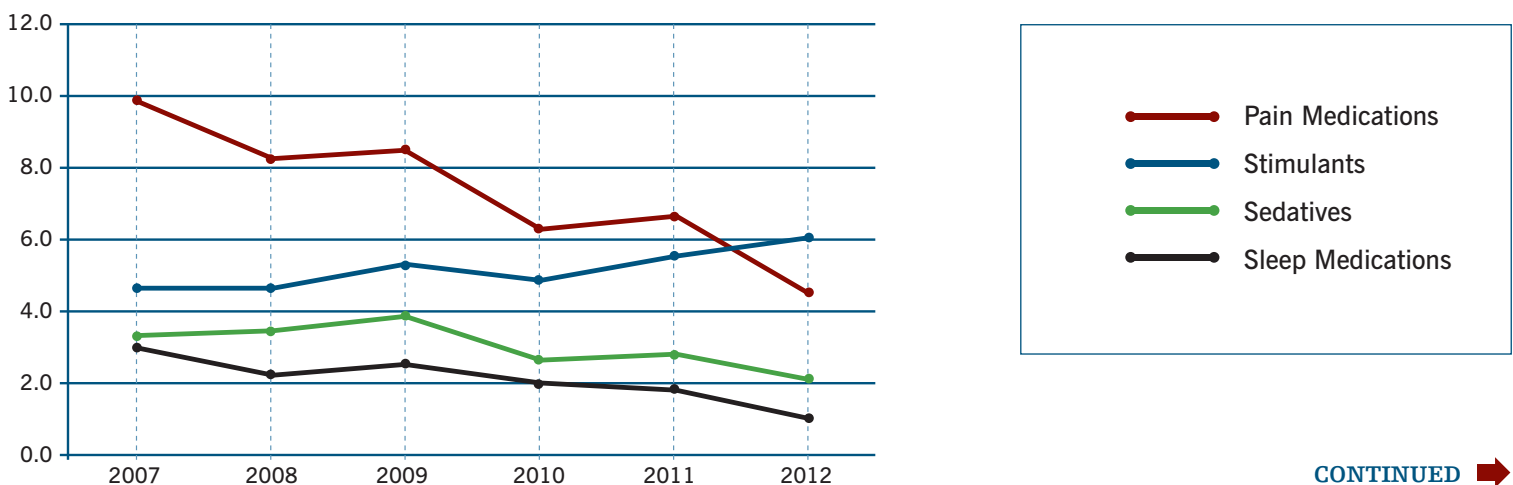
To identify concerns and measure progress, Partners in Prevention (PIP) created the Missouri College Health Behavior Survey (MCHBS). The online survey has been implemented each spring since 2007. The survey assesses student substance use, consequences and protective behaviors among the 21 participating campuses.

According to the 2012 MCHBS, the most frequently reported substances used by Missouri college students in the past year were alcohol (79%), tobacco products (43%) and marijuana (21%). Nine percent (9%) of Missouri college students reported using prescription drugs without physician consent. The most common prescription drugs used were stimulants (6%) and pain medications (5%). These were followed by sedatives or anxiety medications (3%) and sleeping medications (1%).

REPORTED USE IN THE PAST YEAR		EXAMPLES
Any Non-Medical Prescription Drug Use	9%	
Stimulants	6%	Dexedrine, Adderall, Ritalin, Concerta
Pain Medications	5%	Vicodin, OxyCotin, Codeine, Demerol, Morphine
Sedatives/Anxiety	3%	Barbituates, Valium, Librium, Xanax, Ativan, Klonopin
Sleeping Medications	1%	Ambien, Halcion, Restoril

Statewide Trends

Since implementation of the MCHBS survey, we have observed changes in prescription drug use. The most notable change includes a reduction in pain medication use from 10% in 2007 down to 5% in 2012. Stimulant use has increased from 4.6% in 2007 to 6% in 2012.



Student Reasons for Use

The most common reason for prescription drug use by our students was to improve performance. Students also reported prescription drug use to alleviate negative feelings, enhance experiences, have a good time, facilitate sleep and assist with weight loss. Interestingly, only 2% of students reported using prescription drugs to “fit in”.

IMPORTANCE OF USE (Important + Very Important)		ENDORSEMENT
Improve Performance	Improve Academics	45%
	Increased Energy	41%
Alleviate Negative Feelings	Reduce Pain	36%
	Stress Reduction	30%
Enhancement Experiences	Mood Enhancement	26%
	To Have a Good Time	21%
Other	Sleep Aids	24%
	Weight Loss	8%
	To Fit In	2%

Perceived Consequences of Use

For the most part, students did not perceive negative consequences associated with their use of prescription medications. When queried about perceived problems or concerns associated with use, no more than 4% reported these negative consequences. Conversely, about a quarter of the students reported positive consequences of improved academic performance (27%) and pain reduction (26%).

CONSEQUENCES OF USE (Quite a bit + To a Great Extent)		ENDORSEMENT
Perceived Negative Consequences	Lower Psychological Well-Being	4%
	Strained Relationships with Family/Friends	4%
	Poor Physical Health	3%
	Academic Problems	3%
	Financial Problems	3%
	Legal Troubles	1%
	Employment Problems	1%
Perceived Positive Consequences	Reduced Pain	26%
	Improved Academic Performance	27%

DISCUSSION

We still have much to learn about use trends, prescription drug availability and the specific negative consequences associated with non-medical prescription drug use. While we have observed a marked decrease in pain medication use, the Missouri Department of Health has identified pain medication use as contributing to increased drug-related deaths within our state.

Missouri college students who use prescription drugs endorse perceived effects of improved performance, alleviation of negative consequences and mood enhancement. Conversely, students are not reporting the negative consequences typically associated with non-medical prescription drug use.

SUMMARY

As members of our Statewide Partners in Prevention coalition, it is imperative that we continue to gather quantitative and qualitative data from our students on the use of all substances and their associated negative consequences. As we have seen from our work with alcohol prevention, if we continue to work collectively, we can significantly improve health and reduce risk for our students.

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