

PRESCRIPTION DRUG MISUSE

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. In order to gain an understanding of the current health behaviors of college students, PIP implements the Missouri College Health Behavior Survey (MCHBS) each year. The information gained from the MCHBS allows PIP to learn more about the high-risk behaviors that students are engaging in, such as prescription drug misuse.

DISCUSSION

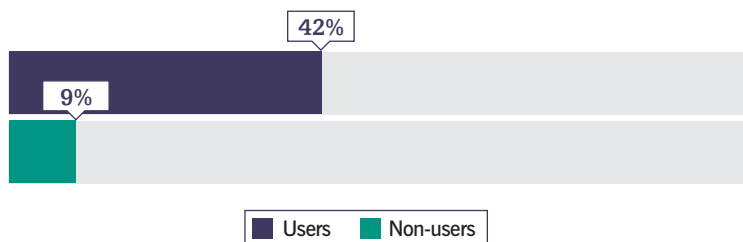
When examining the 2014 MCHBS results of students who misuse prescription drugs* compared to those who do not, interesting findings arise. There is relatively little difference between students who are non-users and users when examining whether or not prescription drug misuse is discussed within their family setting and if their parents have shared disapproval about prescription drug misuse. Eighty-four percent (84%) of users perceive their parents would disapprove of misusing prescription drugs similar to 93% of non-users.

Perceptions of Parental Approval



Conversely, prominent differences are noted when comparing peer approval of prescription drug use. Users perceive a much higher rate of approval from their peers. Forty-two percent (42%) reporting they perceive their friends to approve, while only 9% of non-users perceive their friends approve of misusing prescription drugs.

Perceptions of Peer Approval



Similarly, users report easier access to prescription drugs. Thirty-one percent (31%) of students who use prescription drugs report having “very easy” access, twice that of non-users. An alarming amount of students report gaining access from friends. The most common way for students to obtain prescription drugs is from friends (56%), followed by 16% of students report obtaining prescription drugs from family members. Interestingly, a large percentage of prescription drug exchange is nonmonetary. Fifty-one percent (51%) of users said they are given prescription drugs rather than stealing (1%) or purchasing (31%).

SUMMARY

Educational efforts to address prescription drug misuse appear to be necessary on many of our campuses. The 2014 MCHBS data suggests that student users perceive their behavior as relatively acceptable by peers and report fairly easy access to prescription drugs. If campuses can educate friends of misusers about the dangers of these drugs, approval of this behavior may decrease. Additionally, if we can limit access to prescription drugs, misuse may decline as well. Campus educators can help prevent prescription drug misuse by educating those with appropriate prescriptions on how to keep their medications safe, out of sight, and out of the hands of others. **To obtain more resources and prevention materials, contact Missouri Partners in Prevention and MoSafeRX at rx.missouri.edu.**

Contact Partners in Prevention at (573) 884-7551.
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*Prescription drug misuse defined as students who report “use of prescription drugs without a doctor’s prescription”.