RADARS
SYSTEM

Title:	Predictors of severe prescription drug abuse among college students using the RADARS® System College Survey
Authors:	Wheat A, Buchholtz C, Davis J, Dart RC
Meeting:	College on Problems of Drug Dependence (CPDD) Annual Meeting
Date:	June 2011
Location	Hollywood, FL

Abstract:

Aims: The prevalence of non-medical prescription drug use (NMDU) among US college students is increasing. This analysis aimed to characterize demographic and behavioral predictors of severe drug abuse problems among college students reporting NMDU.

Methods: Data from RADARS System College Survey, a nationally representative web-based survey of NMDU in college students, were used (3Q2010). Respondents endorsing use of one or more prescription medications (opioids, stimulants, muscle relaxants, anxiolytics, anti-depressants, or sleep-aids) in the past 3 months for any reason other than what was prescribed by their doctor were included (n=569). All respondents completed a validated drug abuse screening instrument, the DAST-10. Low DAST-10 was defined as scoring ≥ 5, and High DAST-10 was defined as scoring ≤ 6. Chi-squared tests and t-tests were used to compare demographic and behavioral characteristics of respondents with High vs. Low DAST-10 scores.

Results: The High DAST-10 group was more likely male (50% vs. 30%, $p<.001$), Hispanic ethnicity (36% vs.15%, $p<.001$), a fraternity/sorority member (48% vs.20%, $p<.001$), and a tobacco user (75% vs.53%, $p<.001$). The high DAST-10 group was more likely to report NMDU of more than one prescription drug class ($p<.001$). The High DAST-10 group was more likely to have used illicit drugs in the past 3 months (marijuana, MDMA, cocaine, crystal meth, hallucinogens, and heroin, $p<.001$). The High DAST-10 group was more likely to report reasons for their NMDU; "to get high" (20% vs.13%, $p<.05$), "curiosity" (18% vs.7%, $p<.001$), or "to treat withdrawal symptoms" (6% vs. 2%, $p<.05$).

Conclusions: College Students with severe problems related to drug abuse may be abusing several prescription drug classes as well as illicit drugs; this should be considered when designing interventions for this population.

Financial Support: The RADARS System is a public non-profit organization providing post-marketing surveillance of prescription medications to pharmaceutical manufacturers.