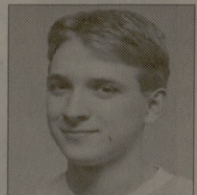


Ritalin Abuse Threatens A&M

Columnist



Glenn Janik
sophomore
political science major

Many Aggies have used a cup of coffee, Dr. Pepper or Vivran for a quick energy boost while studying.

But, a new pill has appeared in Texas, promising higher grade-point ratios and faster reading: Ritalin. Designed for people with Attention Deficit Disorder, Ritalin is being abused by college students to get better grades.

Although a "smart pill" may offer hope to many students, those who chemically cheat their way to higher grades face deadly consequences. The drug is attractive to students because it blocks out distractions and allows for greater focus while studying. Although it is used to cure hyperactivity in children and increase learning capabilities, it is popular in college for the same reasons. Ritalin has been nicknamed the "smart pill" and "nerd coke" because of its intelligence-boosting qualities.

In spite of the numerous dangers of the drug, it is being used by college students to cheat time. Most students face the pressure of studying for several exams in the same week, being hundreds of pages behind for tomorrow's quiz, or having to work too long to study effectively. Ritalin promises to solve these problems the easy way.

An unnamed University of Texas student described the attractiveness of the drug to CNN. "The most important thing I do is the grades I get," she said. "If it's 4 am, the hardest thing to do is type another word or read another line, and with Ritalin you don't mind."

College students also praise the drug because it allows anyone to read for hours without stopping and aids in comprehension.

Despite praises for the drug, some of its other effects are deadly. The Drug Enforcement Agency classifies Ritalin in the same category as cocaine and amphetamines. The drug, which acts as a stimulant, is highly addictive and can cause heart and circulatory problems.

In 1995, a Virginia college student suffered a fatal heart attack induced by the drug.

However, the Ritalin problem also effects students at Texas A&M. The University has a reputation for being a relatively conservative and drug-free campus. Besides alcohol, caffeine and tobacco it seems hard to find other drugs at A&M.

Dr. Dennis Reardon, coordinator of the Alcohol and Drug Education programs at Texas A&M, discussed Ritalin abuse on campus. "Ritalin is an amphetamine, so I could understand why students would use it. However, cases of Ritalin abuse on campus remain rare. The study drug of choice is clearly caffeine," he said.

Despite Reardon's assessment, the threat of Ritalin at A&M exists for several reasons. Ritalin has become one of the most popular drugs in the Mexican towns of Juarez and Nuevo Laredo. These towns make Texas the distribution point of Ritalin for the rest of the country. Aggies who travel to South Padre for spring break will no doubt be surrounded by the drug. Also, Ritalin abuse has been extensively cataloged at the University of Texas. It is naive to believe the drug has not filtered its way to some of the 43,000 Aggies of College Station.

University and student organizations on campus have been vocal against alcohol abuse, but many remain silent about the dangers of other drugs. Ritalin is dangerous not just for its side effects, but for the people it attracts. Students who are surrounded by stress and deadlines cannot afford to escape at a local bar, but they find it easy to pop a "smart pill." This is not just a drug for Austin students or drug abusers; this drug represents a threat to Aggies.

Stress and school work are no excuse to gamble with life and Ritalin. College places pressure on students. Learning to handle this pressure is part of the college experience. Cheating this pressure with Ritalin not only deprives students of a learning process but also threatens to deprive them of life.

Divide and conquer

Maxine Waters sends message of blame, not hope

Columnist



David Johnston
Junior
mathematics major

Friday, the Student Conference on National Affairs will host California Congresswoman Maxine Waters. She will give a speech entitled "Social Fragmentation and Race, What is the Future?"

Although Waters has first-hand knowledge of the country's social problems and poor race relations, she has not done much to alleviate the situation. Waters tends to attack problems with money and excuses, and many people accuse her of adding to America's racial disharmony. She has even developed a reputation for abrasive language.

SCONA and Texas A&M would be better off bringing a speaker who can offer the audience ideas and solutions, rather than complaints and accusations.

Referring to the Democratic ticket at the 1992 Democratic Convention, Waters said, "This is the last time I support an all-white anything." Following the Rodney King riots, Waters said the rioters were acting under "black rage" and could not be held responsible for their actions. This sort of comment does not comfort the families of those who were killed, nor does it alleviate social fragmentation.

Jared Cordts, a representative from SCONA, said Waters has been a vocal figure on issues such as the O.J. Simpson trial and allegations of the CIA aiding the influx of drugs into inner cities.

By focusing on allegations of CIA drug ties, Waters again demonstrates her tendency to blame others. At issue are charges that the CIA encouraged the sale of drugs in cities such as Los Angeles to help finance overseas operations. Since Waters is calling for a congressional inquiry, she has removed the focus from the drug users who are destroying lives and neighborhoods.

Waters even blamed her own district's violence on U.S. involvement in Operation

Desert Storm. She said urban gang members could not be expected to stop fighting if America's leaders were waging battles. Her opponents responded by saying citizens could not be expected to take back their neighborhoods from the urban gangs if the allies would not take Kuwait back from Hussein.

It is obvious that Waters is proficient at identifying problems and, in many cases, creating or excusing them. But she has not been successful solving them.

Waters' favorite solution for any problem seems to be government funding. She has supported sending huge amounts of federal money into the Watts Corridor and other disadvantaged neighborhoods. Taxpayers have seen this money

literally go up in flames when rioters torched homes and businesses. Her constituents need real solutions, but Waters has failed to provide them. Race relations cannot be solved with a blank check.

Waters supported more net-spending increases than any other member of last year's Congress. Even though the nation's economy is suffering and its debt is climbing, Waters voted for over \$100 billion in new spending last year.

She has prevented citizens from regaining control of their situation by making excuses for her constituents and implying they can only be helped by government intervention.

The only solution to our deteriorating social structure is accountability. When people begin taking responsibility for their own neighborhoods and acknowledge their own problems, then they can work together to make things better. This won't happen as long as people

feel their neighborhoods belong to the government and their problems are caused by the CIA.

Waters' own actions demonstrate a lack of accountability. While her constituents suffer from a poor economy, Waters continues to support new spending and higher taxes.

Aggies have already seen enough of this attitude and have nothing to learn from Waters. Students say Aggie spirit is dying because of fraternities, two-percenters and the freshman class. Administrators blame problems on off-campus tutors, low salaries and the results of budget cuts.

California, Congress and this campus need a good dose of responsibility and action. Unless Waters is going to bring specific solutions and not just a laundry list of grievances, she can never hope to have a positive impact on Friday's audience.



MAIL CALL

Rude baseball fan ruins spirit of game

I went to my first A&M baseball game with a bunch of friends on Saturday.

We were all having a good time until a rude fan showed up. At first he was just yelling really stupid things about the game on the previous day. I can see yelling at the other team, but this guy was getting out of hand. He was even yelling at the Aggie fans. He

was yelling sexist remarks like "I'd like to see her in a baseball uniform" or when people were hitting for the Black-Eyed Pea gift certificates, he yelled stuff like "She swings like a girl".

Well, she was a girl and I am sure she heard him. My friends who came to the game with me say after I left things got even worse. He started yelling not only sexist remarks, but also racist remarks. I am really sorry Arizona had to listen to his taunting. I just hope that they do not think

everyone here is like that.
Helen Curbello
Class of '00

Replant jokesters tarnish tradition

Replant is a time to put back into the earth that we took away just a few months ago.

This was my first venture to this great tradition and I, along with the other Johnny Appleseeders, did our best to ensure the trees we planted would flourish in the pots as well as in the ground. I wish I could say this about everyone. I was ashamed of those who thought it would quite hilarious to throw dirt and plant trees upside down. You know who you are. Next year, why don't you just stay at home?

Michael Gath
Class of '97

Hecklers embarrass 10th man

"Touch his butt, touch his butt," yells the crowd at Olsen Field, noting baseball players' tendency to pat each other on the backside.

It's baseball season again, and Texas A&M's most vocal fans have returned to Olsen Field. There is no doubt hecklers are funny. Their antics sometimes prove more entertaining than anything occurring on the field, but no one is safe from their wrath.

They gladly abuse umpires, the other team and the announcer. Between innings, they stand on the deck railing to yell at players in the opposing team's dugout.

Hecklers illustrate how the line between right and wrong is often obscured in the name of fun, and if encouraging the pitcher to touch the catcher's butt is Aggie spirit, E. King Gill must be rolling over in his grave.

Often, the comments are clever. At Saturday's game against Arizona State, one heckler elicited a big laugh, shouting, "Hey, Kenny's back in the fetal position." The joke was a reference to Arizona State player Kenny Corley's cramped batting stance.

Occasionally, the taunts are questionable in taste. Overweight players are an easy target. At Saturday's game, Arizona State assistant coach Victor Solis became a target of hecklers' malice. Anytime Solis stepped backward, he was accompanied by a droning, "beep, beep, beep," from the crowd, mimicking the sound of a wide-loaded tractor-trailer as it backs up.

Jimmy Harrison, a former A&M student, has been harassing opposing teams at Olsen Field since 1989. Harrison said hecklers try to preserve

a family atmosphere at the games.

"We try to keep it in good taste," Harrison said. "We will not cross the line of language, [but] we will make an innuendo every now and then."

Harrison said hecklers add atmosphere to the ballpark.

"I know people who bring their parents to the game just to see

us," he said.

Tim Elwell, a senior journalism major, said hecklers have limits to taunting.

He said hecklers avoid "anything that you wouldn't say in front of a kid or your parents."

Unquestionably, abusing opposing teams is bad sportsmanship. The taunts heard at Olsen Field would never surface in polite conversation.

Aggie baseball games are a favorite pastime of many families from the community. The question any heckler needs to ask himself is

"What does heckling teach the children who attend these games?"

Although hecklers like to entertain, they also intend to distract opposing teams.

"If we can get into the other team's head here at Olsen Field, we have a shot at winning the game," Harrison said.

Occasionally, the taunting works. Some players take the comments personally.

Matt Matthews, a senior industrial distribution major, noted

an incident at last week's game against the University of Texas-Pan American.

"Last week, we had a guy flipping us off," Matthews said.

The hecklers' behavior creates the moral dilemma of whether inappropriate behavior is acceptable because it is fun. The repercussions of this question haunt A&M. Both a fraternity and a Corps unit have been disbanded this year for hazing their members.

Many students on campus decorate their residence hall rooms with stolen street signs.

During the freeze earlier this semester, some students "borrowed" trays from dining halls to use as sleds.

All of these actions are immoral and illegal. Yet, they were justified because they were fun. Rationalizing immoral behavior is dangerous because sometimes it is hard to know when it has gone too far.

The boundaries of right and wrong exist to keep us from hurting ourselves and others. As for the hecklers, baseball coach Mark Johnson best

addressed the necessary limits for their behavior.

"I like our fans, as long as they keep it clean and keep a family atmosphere," Johnson said.

Keeping a family atmosphere means keeping the commentary tasteful and free of sexual innuendo, which the hecklers need to work toward.

But despite their shortcomings, one has to like the hecklers. After all, they are in the same business as opinion columnists: They entertain and provoke.

