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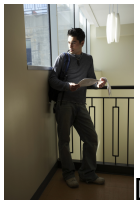
Colleges Tighten Rules on ADHD Drugs

 Dozens of colleges are instituting stricter rules for diagnosing and medicating attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), *The New York Times* reports.

The rules are a reaction to the growing overuse of these medications. One study at a large university found 34 percent of students had used a prescription stimulant drug to help them focus when they felt academic stress.

Prescription stimulants can cause a variety of health problems if they are misused, including an irregular heartbeat and panic attacks. They can be deadly in rare cases if they are mixed with alcohol or other drugs.

Some colleges require students who are prescribed ADHD medications to sign a contract stating they will not misuse or share pills. George Mason University in Virginia does not allow its doctors to make a diagnosis of ADHD, while William & Mary, also in Virginia, forbids its physicians to prescribe stimulants to students; instead, they refer them to off-campus doctors. At Marquette University in Wisconsin, students must sign a release that allows doctors to call their parents for a full medical history, and confirm the student's symptoms.

"We get complaints that you're making it hard to get treatment," Dr. Jon Porter, Director of Medical, Counseling and Psychiatry Services at the University of Vermont, told the newspaper. The school does not perform diagnostic evaluations for ADHD. "There's some truth to that. The counterweight is these prescriptions can be abused at a high rate, and we're not willing to be a part of that and end up with kids sick or dead."

Ruth Hughes, Chief Executive of the advocacy group Children and Adults With Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, says these college policies may be discriminatory, because they are not applied to other medical or psychiatric conditions. She says that if students are required to sign a contract for stimulants, they should also do so for commonly abused opioid painkillers.