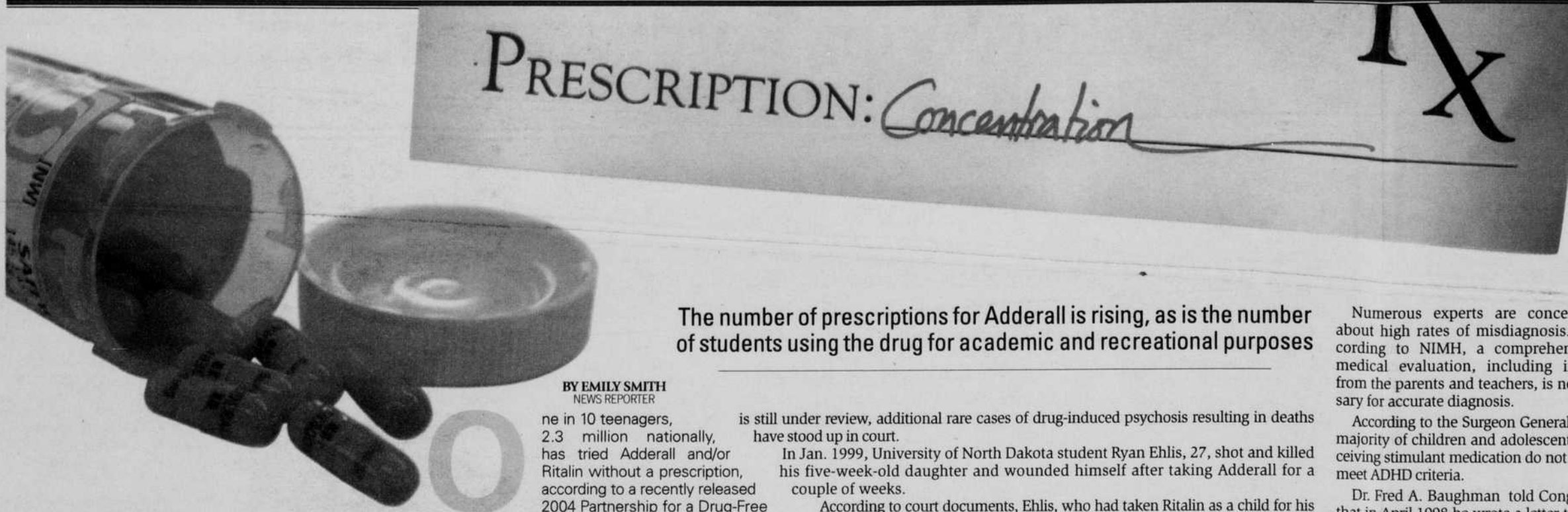




The number of prescriptions for Adderall is rising, as is the number of students using the drug for academic and recreational purposes

BY EMILY SMITH
NEWS REPORTER

ne in 10 teenagers, 2.3 million nationally, has tried Adderall and/or Ritalin without a prescription, according to a recently released 2004 Partnership for a Drug-Free

is still under review, additional rare cases of drug-induced psychosis resulting in deaths have stood up in court.

In Jan. 1999, University of North Dakota student Ryan Ehliis, 27, shot and killed his five-week-old daughter and wounded himself after taking Adderall for a couple of weeks.

According to court documents, Ehliis, who had taken Ritalin as a child for his ADHD, was having trouble with his studies and went to a psychiatrist who gave him a 30-day prescription of Adderall.

Ehliis' girlfriend, also the mother of his children, testified that Ehliis stopped acting like himself the first day he took Adderall. After the first week, he began to describe delusions and hallucinations. After he ingested the remainder of the prescription, he began talking with God and his dead grandfather. Claiming to be acting on God's orders, Ehliis killed his baby before turning the gun on himself.

Charges were dismissed after various doctors reported he was suffering from "Amphetamine-Induced Psychotic Disorder."

In 2002 Dawn Branson experienced an Adderall-related episode of psychosis in which she caused a car accident, killing her only child, according to a CBS report.

In both cases, the victims said they were never aware of the possibility of psychosis.

Cabrey said it is up to physicians, parents and caretakers to warn patients about potential risks, and Shire works directly with them.

Stimulants are the most-researched ADHD treatment, and a 1998 Consensus Development Conference report on ADHD sponsored by the National Institutes of Health confirmed that the short-term use of stimulants is safe and effective.

The side effects associated with Adderall affect people who do not have ADHD more severely than those who do, although occurrences are present in both categories, University pharmacist Gregg Wendland said.

Common side effects include insomnia, appetite suppression, stomach aches, mood changes, dry mouth, headaches and jitteriness.

According to the FDA, Adderall's more serious risks are sudden death, abuse potential, worsening mental illness (psychosis), possible decreased growth, weight loss and increased tics.

"Animal studies have clearly shown that drugs like Adderall, the amphetamines kill brain cells at routine clinical doses," Breggin stated before Congress in 2000.

At the same hearing on "Behavioral Drugs in Schools: Questions and Concerns," Patricia Weathers, a New York parent of a child with ADHD, said that while her son was taking the stimulant Ritalin, he didn't grow for three years.

"When I took him off all the drugs, he grew three sizes in three weeks. That is a size a week," Weathers said. "I will never know what kind of permanent damage it has done to my son."

Controversy surrounding ADHD

ADHD occurs in 3 to 5 percent of school-age children and is four times more likely to be present in boys than girls, according to a report of the Surgeon General. Shire Pharmaceuticals estimates the figure to be between 3 and 9 percent, with 66 percent of childhood cases continuing into adulthood, affecting 8.6 million adults in the United States.

The number of ADHD diagnoses jumped from 1 million in 1990 to more than 3 million in 1992. Former Colorado representative Bob Schaffer explained during the 2000 hearing that the reasons for this can be found in a number of federal incentives introduced during the time period.

"In 1990, Supplemental Security Income, a Federal welfare program, was opened to allow low-income parents whose children were labeled with ADHD to be eligible for a cash benefit under the SSI program," Schaffer said.

"In 1991, the Department of Education made hundreds of special education dollars available every year for children labeled with ADHD and also for those in need of special education," Schaffer told Congress.

"After that, modification schools could receive more than \$400 per student under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) for each child diagnosed with ADHD."

In the 24th Annual Report to Congress, IDEA reported a 28.5 percent jump in students ages 6 to 21 who were served for specific learning disabilities between 1991 and 2000.

"One possible explanation for the growth in this category comes from the states, which have reported that the increase is due in large part to the increased identification and provision of services to children with attention deficit disorder and

attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder," the report states.

Numerous experts are concerned about high rates of misdiagnosis. According to NIMH, a comprehensive medical evaluation, including input from the parents and teachers, is necessary for accurate diagnosis.

According to the Surgeon General, the majority of children and adolescents receiving stimulant medication do not fully meet ADHD criteria.

Dr. Fred A. Baughman told Congress that in April 1998 he wrote a letter to Attorney General Janet Reno stating: "The biggest health care fraud in U.S. history is the representation of ADHD to be a disease and the drugging of millions of normal children." He went on to say that disease equals physical abnormality, which is absent in the brains of children with ADHD.

According to the Surgeon General, because symptoms of ADHD respond well to stimulants, and stimulants increase dopamine in the brain, the "dopamine hypothesis" has driven recent research.

Several reasons for misdiagnoses highlighted at the congressional hearing included an inability to read, problems at home and schools cutting out recess. Until the federal Child Medication Safety Act of 2003, a bill designed to protect children and their parents from being forced into administering psychotropic medication to attend school, there were various reports of teachers and other school staff pushing the diagnoses of ADHD in students.

Patricia Weathers said her son's diagnosis was based on a checklist and a short evaluation by a pediatrician, not a psychiatrist, after the principal told her to put the boy on psychiatric drugs.

They put Weathers' first-grade son, Michael, on the stimulant Ritalin. By the time he was in third grade, he was completely withdrawn. He began chewing on his clothes, paper and other things. Weathers said his behavior became more and more bizarre. When his mother showed research on the side effects of Ritalin to the principal, Michael was dismissed from school.

"I hear lots of stories like Ms. Weathers'. I have heard lots of them in my state," Schaffer said. "I have heard lots from others around the country."

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Grades by the Milligram

Some students acquire Adderall to assist concentration during studying; others who have prescriptions sell pills for profit

BY AMANDA BOLSINGER
NEWS REPORTER

hen classes got too hard, she felt she needed a way to keep up with everyone else in her highly competitive major. Her grades weren't cutting it, and Adderall, a stimulant prescription drug, seemed to be the easiest way to concentrate and get

more out of her studying.

But it wasn't an easy decision. The 18-year-old freshman has a heart problem that Adderall, a drug designed to control Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, could worsen.

Yet the gamble is worth it for a higher GPA, she said.

"It's a type of meth, speed pretty much," she said. "I have heart problems, so it's a bad thing for me, but it's selfish. You want your good grades at any cost, and my grades have improved a lot since taking Adderall."

Before coming to the University this fall, she had never heard of Adderall.

But it soon became a constant topic of conversation; it seemed like everyone was using it to study.

"I heard people talking about it in my classes, saying it was the drug of choice and that it's a drug that can help you concentrate," she said. "So I decided to try it."

She knew of many people using the drug without a prescription, but it was harder to obtain than she thought. Everyone was using the drug, but no one would say where they got it or share their own.

"I had to ask around," she said. "Everyone had taken it before, but no one actually had it, and the people that did have it weren't wanting to give it out."

She kept asking and discovered someone with a prescription for Adderall who was willing to give her some pills. She got the pills for free but said they usually sell for around \$2 per pill.

"I know why people don't give them out," she said. "You have it and know you are going to need it later to study. It really does make your grades better, so you don't give it away. I would pay up to \$10 for a pill if I needed to."

Despite the popularity of the pill, she was nervous about using it for the first time. She never had used drugs before and had some misgivings about Adderall.

"I'm really outgoing and very talkative," she said. "I was really hoping that it didn't make me go crazy and get all hyper."

She tried it and was pleasantly surprised, she said. She had no problems concentrating on her homework and was able to study for hours after taking one pill. Her focus remained on her books, and things that used to distract her, such as people coming and going, didn't attract her attention.

"It directed my focus to my books," she said. "When I started reading, that's what I focused on, and when I started a problem, all I focused on was that problem and nothing else. Nothing could divert my attention."

She takes one 5 milligram pill, which works for eight hours. She said she drinks a lot of water to keep the pill working, whereas many people she knows take more pills or a higher dosage.

"I only take 5 milligrams; a lot of people I know take 20 or more," she said. "I can't even imagine what that would do."

Many people abusing Adderall become addicted. Side effects include a faster heart rate, high blood pressure and increased risk of stroke.

While effects to her heart don't worry her, she said, she does worry about becoming addicted, something she has seen in many people who use it. She only uses the drug during midterms, finals and when she has an important test.

"I know a lot of people who are addicted to it and can't study at all without Adderall," she said. "It's definitely not for everyday homework because it is so addictive. There is no way I would take it any other time besides midterms and finals."

A prescription for pills

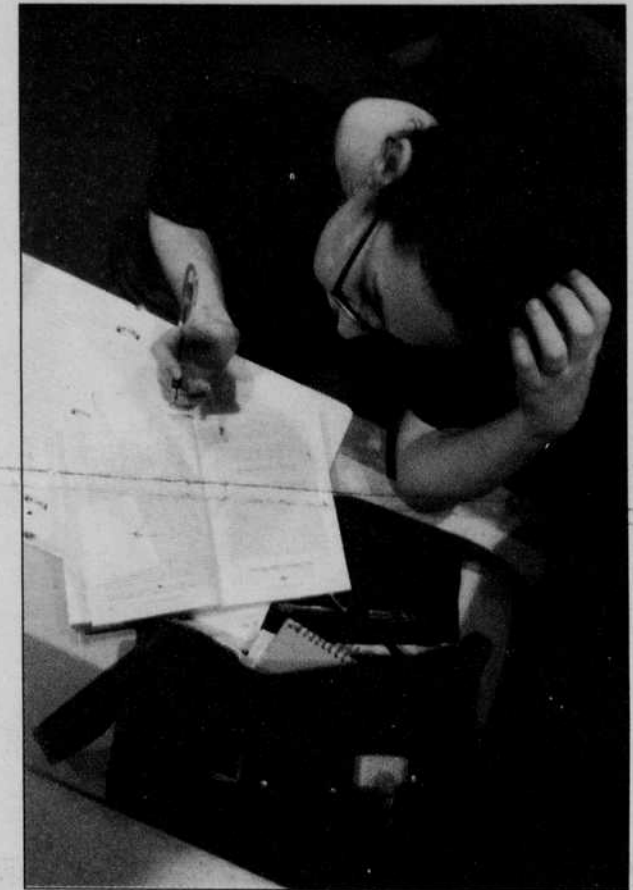
Freshman Elizabeth Wallace said she has been using Adderall to control her Attention Deficit Disorder for four years. She was diagnosed with ADD when she was young and was prescribed Ritalin, which she took through middle school.

She didn't take medication for ADD again until her junior year of high school, when she was having trouble focusing and her grades began to drop. Then she started taking Adderall.

"It removes distractions," Wallace said. "It makes me able to function. Without it I would focus on outside conversations, which makes it really hard to pay attention in lecture classes."

With the abundance of Adderall sales on campus, Wallace said many people who know she has a prescription assume she doesn't need it and will sell it.

"I actually need mine," Wallace said. "People take it and



TIM BOBOSKY | PHOTOGRAPHER

Elizabeth Wallace, a University freshman, takes her Adderall prescription to help her study in the Knight Library.



It removes distractions. It makes me able to function. Without it I would focus on outside conversations, which makes it really hard to pay attention in lecture classes.

Freshman Elizabeth Wallace, who is prescribed Adderall to control her ADD



DANIELLE HICKEY | PHOTO EDITOR

Some University students, such as the student photographed, use Adderall without a prescription to help them focus when studying.

It's a type of meth, speed pretty much. I have heart problems, so it's a bad thing for me, but it's selfish. You want your good grades at any cost, and my grades have improved a lot since taking Adderall.

Non-prescribed Adderall user on side effects



assume I don't. I don't get the same results as them. I need it to get normal grades."

Wallace currently takes a 25 milligram pill before her classes. She takes one in the morning and one in the afternoon and says each pill lasts four to five hours. She only takes the pill when she knows she will need it, and on weekends, she said she tries to take just one pill on Saturday to get her studying done in one session so she doesn't have to take the medication on Sunday.

Wallace said she is constantly being asked to sell her Adderall, especially during midterms and finals.

"It's really hard to say 'no' to some people," Wallace said. "It's very, very illegal to sell, so I don't do it. Most people respect it, but during finals week I had to lock my bottle up."

She said she feels bad for people who come to her saying they have reading to do, but she still refuses to sell the drug.

"I can sell it for a lot. I have had people come up to me and offer \$20 for four or five pills," Wallace said. "It's tempting for a poor college kid."

She is thankful she has a roommate whom she trusts, but on short trips she has had pills "go missing," even though everyone with her was a close friend.

As far as she can tell, people who are selling the pills are people with a prescription who need it or who were tested at a young age and don't need the medication anymore.

"It goes in phases, or you can outgrow it," Wallace said.

Wallace fills her prescription at the University Health Center pharmacy once per month. Her prescription is for 60 pills per month, which is monitored closely.

"It's a Class 2, so every time the pharmacy fills it they have to speak to a doctor," Wallace said. "One time I lost my suitcase and had to explain to the doctor. He gave me a prescription for

exactly one week. They monitor pretty closely."

Wallace said she uses the pills as sparingly as possible for school work and usually doesn't take the pills during the summer.

"I don't know if I like the medication," Wallace said. "I feel like I'm not really me. On the medication I'm different. It's meant to stifle hyperactivity, but sometimes I want to be hyper and giddy."

Controlling the drug

Jerome Vergamini is a consulting psychiatrist at the University. He said he sees more than 10 students each day at the health center, and up to half of those students have appointments related to ADD and ADHD. He frequently prescribes Adderall as a treatment to help students with ADD and ADHD to concentrate in classes and while studying.

Adderall is a stimulant Class 2 narcotic drug that, when used by those with ADD and ADHD, helps to put up "filters." Vergamini described the conditions of ADD and ADHD as a disorder of distractibility and said that for students with ADD and ADHD, distractions such as noise in large lecture classes or people walking in and out of the library can make it nearly impossible to focus on the task at hand.

"They have difficulty focusing, staying on task, taking good notes," Vergamini said. "The medications put up filters that are needed."

Although Adderall is a stimulant, it slows down and focuses people with the chemical imbalances that cause ADD and ADHD. People without ADD and ADHD who illegally use Adderall have a different experience. The drug keeps them awake and suppresses their appetites, among other more serious side effects.

"The problem is that with people who don't need it and think they are studying well, it is probably less helpful than they realize," Vergamini said.

Those without ADD and ADHD can quickly develop a tolerance for the medication, needing progressively larger doses for the same results.

"It is a way to get high," Vergamini said. "Some who abuse it crush it and snort it or put it in any office."

Vergamini said testing for ADD and ADHD has become more stringent as the pill has grown in popularity as a study aid. Vergamini said it is "absolutely possible" for people to fake ADD to try to get a prescription, but the school has developed criteria to prevent those people from getting the pills.

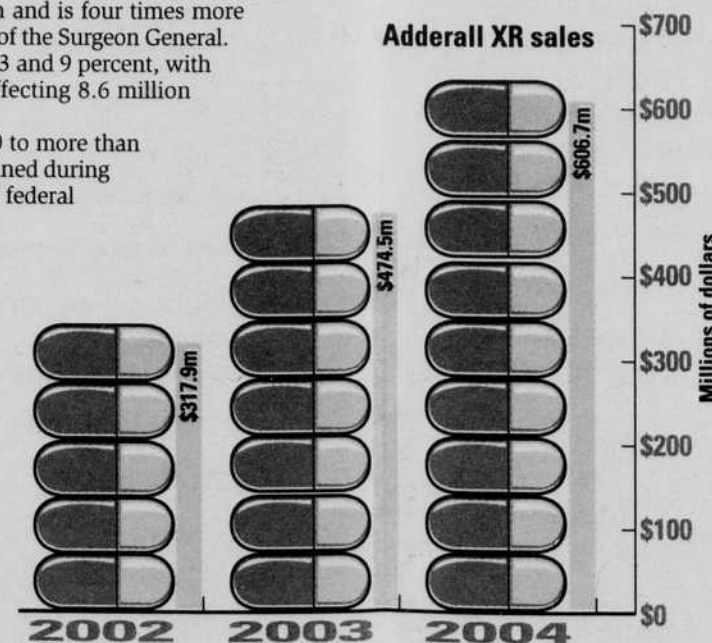
"When we suspect a student is faking we send them for a TOVA (Test of Variables of Attention), which they probably couldn't fake," Vergamini said.

If a student has already been tested and diagnosed for ADD or ADHD, he or she can fill a prescription at the health center pharmacy with a written doctor prescription.

Prescriptions are most often given for one month at a time. Vergamini said he hears what he calls "pirate stories," or stories about pills getting stolen or lost, but he isn't swayed.

"If you tell me you lost or spilled your pills, I tell you that you will just have to wait 'til next month."

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Source: Shire Pharmaceuticals' 2003 and 2004 annual reports

GRAPHIC AND PAGE DESIGN BY ELLIOTT ASBURY