



ADHD and College Students

by Sam Goldstein, PhD

MOST RESEARCH LITERATURE in ADHD has focused on children and adolescents. Over the past two decades researchers have paid increasing attention to the developmental course of these youth as they transition into late adolescence and young adulthood.

Retrospective and longitudinal research demonstrates that the percentage of young adults with ADHD attending postsecondary schools is far less than in the general population. However, there has been a recent research focus on the small group that attends college. Information is limited as

to whether the number of students with ADHD attending college has increased or whether interest in the functioning and impairments of this group has increased. Regardless, the demands of postsecondary education as well as risks and necessary life transitions in this age range have been understudied.



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► DuPaul GJ, Weyandt LL, O'Dell, SM, Varejao M. (2009). College students

with ADHD: Current status and future directions. *Journal of Attention Disorders*, 13(3), 234-250.

► Katz N, Petscher Y, & Welles T. (2009). Diagnosing attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder in college students: An investigation of the impact of informant ratings on diagnosis and subjective impairment. *Journal of Attention Disorders*, 13(3), 277-283.

► Norwalk K, Norvilitis JM, & MacLean MG. (2009). ADHD symptomatology and its relationship to factors associated with college adjustment. *Journal of Attention Disorders*, 13(3), 251-258.

► Rabiner DL, Anastopoulos AD, Costello EJ, Hoyle RH, McCabe SE, & Swartzwelder HS. (2009). Motives and perceived consequences of nonmedical ADHD medication use by college students: Are students treating themselves for attention problems? *Journal of Attention Disorders*, 13(3), 259-270.

► Weyandt LL, Janusis G, Wilson KG, Verdi G, Paquin G, Lopez J, Varejao M, & Dussault C. (2009). Non-medical prescription stimulant use among a sample of college students: Relationship with psychological variables. *Journal of Attention Disorders*, 13(3), 284-296. □

What Have We Learned?

- Approximately two to eight percent of college students in the United States report clinically significant levels of ADHD symptoms. The precise number of college students with a diagnosis of ADHD remains unknown.
- Preliminary estimates suggest that approximately twenty-five percent of students receiving disability services in college have been diagnosed with ADHD.
- Students with diagnosed ADHD or high levels of self-reported ADHD symptoms report college problems, including lower GPAs. They are also less likely to complete their education and graduate from college.
- Students with ADHD generally appear to have more driving-related problems than those without ADHD.
- Despite their reported life-skill and college problems, the majority of students with ADHD appear to be functioning reasonably well in college.
- Prescription stimulant misuse has become a problem on college campuses, with approximately seven percent of students reporting use of stimulant medication without a valid prescription. Students report taking the medicine to facilitate schoolwork.
- Despite these initial early findings, there continues to be a limited pool of studies from which to draw conclusions about college students with ADHD. Many of these studies also contain methodological weaknesses, necessitating careful consideration and use of the data.

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