

Cognitive Enhancement

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Cognitive enhancing drugs such as Ritalin, Adderall, and Modafinil are prescribed to patients for the treatment of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, fatigue, and lack of alertness. These drugs, which are meant to help people with these disabilities, are increasingly being used by healthy people to focus more attentively than usual. In the past year, twenty-five percent of college students say they have used cognitive drugs to perform better (Greely, 702). Cognitive drugs that improve mental performance should be considered a fair method of increasing potential. Regulations should make sure that the benefits of taking the drugs by healthy people outweigh the possible side effects. These drugs should be available to those qualified to take them to increase their mental potential.

The first reason why the use of cognitive-enhancing drugs by healthy people should be legal is because the drugs help to maximize mental potential. Something that can improve mental capacity and focus should be considered appropriate to take if the side effects are not too harmful. People in the military are already required to take performance-enhancing cognitive drugs to achieve greater focus and overall success (Greely, 703). The same approach can be used by students trying to focus harder to study and obtain information more efficiently. Drugs that help fatigue because of a lack of sleep should be allowed for people to take to improve what they are doing. Doctors and surgeons who are fatigued would greatly benefit from drugs that allow them to be more alert. If a person suffers from a lack of sleep because they are working all night, they should be allowed to have an aid to enable them to continue focusing on what they are doing. As Henry Greely and his colleagues write, [cognitive drugs] “should be viewed in

the same general category as education, good health habits, and information technology- ways that our uniquely innovative species tries to improve itself”(Greely, 702). Cognitive drugs should be considered a method of taking advantage of ways to increase mental potential and a way to be the best possible.

Cognitive drugs should be legally prescribed to healthy people but there should be regulation involved. This regulation should not consider whether the person really needs the drug, but the possibilities of the drug having negative side effects on the patient. Whether or not the health risks outweigh the benefits, should be decided by the patient and his/her physician. Greely later writes in his commentary, “an adequate policy should include mechanisms for the assessment of both risks and benefits for enhancement uses of drugs and devices, with special attention to long term effects on development and to the possibility of new types of side effects unique to enhancement”(Greely, 703). Cognitive drugs should be legally prescribed to patients whose benefits from the drug outweigh the potential risks. This determination should be made by the patient and his/her physician.

Cognitive drugs should not be considered cheating, but rather a way to improve mental learning and performance for individuals who can benefit from them.

Reference Cited

Greely, Henry. “Towards Responsible Use of Cognitive- Enhancing Drugs by the Healthy.” *Nature* 7 Dec. 2008: 702-705. *Advance Online Publication*. Web. 14 Dec. 2009.