

# Abuse of some prescription drugs can be risk for college sexual assaults, regretted sex

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Credit: University at Buffalo

Numerous studies have found that heavy alcohol use—by the victim and/or perpetrator—is a factor in more than half of sexual assaults on college campuses. Now, research from the University at Buffalo Research Institute on Addictions has found the abuse of prescription drugs by college students also can play a role in negative sexual events such as sexual assault and regretted sex.

RIA Senior Research Scientist Kathleen Parks, PhD, studied the effects of nonmedical use of prescription drugs (NMUPD) by [college students](#),

including opioid analgesics (such as Oxycodone), anxiolytics/sedatives (such as Xanax, Valium or Ambien) and stimulants (such as Adderall or Ritalin). NMUPD is defined as the use of a medication without a legal prescription.

The research found that among the 1,755 students studied, more than 500 reported NMUPD, and of those, a significant number experienced negative sexual events. More than 14 percent of the students who abused prescription drugs experienced regretted sex, and among the female students, 7.1 percent reported being victims of sexual assault.

Significantly, the only [prescription drugs](#) associated with regretted sex and sexual assault were anxiolytics/sedatives.

"The responsibility for rape or any sexual assault always falls squarely with the perpetrator," Parks says. "This study shows NMUPD, particularly anxiolytics/sedatives, can have similar effects as alcohol, including slowed decision-making and physical coordination, which can decrease the ability to recognize danger or fend off a potential perpetrator.

The study did not find that nonmedical use of [opioid analgesics](#) or stimulants was associated with negative sexual events.

"NMUPD is an increasing public health concern, particularly among emerging and young adults," Parks said. "Given the results of this study, parents and college administrators should be concerned about the relationship we found between nonmedical use of anxiolytics/sedatives and negative sexual events, and find ways to educate students about the potential dangers."

Provided by University at Buffalo

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