

Rx Report Assignment

I. General Guidelines

The Rx Report is not a term paper. It's a 2-page report which is designed to be a 2-hour assignment. The Rx Report is merely an exercise for you to apply the pharmacologic concepts and tools you've learned in HSC 427 to assess the value (physiological, psychological, social, etc...) of a psychotropic drug.

A psychotropic drug is a drug which targets the brain and causes an alteration in mood, feelings, emotions, etc...; it is a drug which alters mental status, usually by either increasing or decreasing a neurotransmitter effect in an area of the brain. We've discussed many psychotropic drugs in class (benzodiazepines, barbiturates, narcotics, caffeine, etc...). Ideally, I would like you to choose a psychotropic drug for your Rx Report which interests you so the assignment will be meaningful and enjoyable.

You may choose a drug that is used in medical practice (i.e., prescribed drugs such as Prozac, Valium, morphine, etc...) or one that is illicit (or illegal, such as Ecstasy, heroin, LSD, PCP, etc...).

If you choose an illicit drug to write about in your Rx Report, the NIDA (National Institute on Drug Abuse → "<http://www.nida.nih.gov/>") is highly recommended as your source of information since it is most extensive and reliable. A search engine on the NIDA site will generate enormous information for your Rx Report.

If you choose to write about a drug currently used in Medicine, you may use any of the reputable sources mentioned in the "Rx Drugs" handout (e.g., the PDR, Drug Info 2002, etc...) or any reputable drug reference of your choice.

II. Requirements for the Rx Report

A. Page 1: Factual Information about the Drug

1. Name of the Psychotropic Drug

If the drug is used in Medicine, list the brand and generic names of the drug. For example, Prozac is generically called fluoxetine. If the drug is illicit, list 5 street names (which may be found on the NIDA site) associated with its chemical name (e.g., Marijuana is also called "grass", "weed", "joint", "pot", etc...).

2. Indication(s)

This category will state what the drug is used to treat. For example, Prozac is used to treat depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, etc... If you're writing about an illicit drug like Ecstasy, users will consume the drug to enhance the visual and auditory effects of a rave concert.

A. Page 1: Factual Information about the Drug (continued)

3. Mechanism of Action(s)

In this section, indicate how the drug works (same as “pharmacodynamics”). For example, Prozac works by increasing serotonin levels by blocking its reuptake (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor), which results in an antidepressant effect. As an illicit drug, cocaine works by increasing dopamine in the “pleasure center” of the brain by increasing dopamine release, inhibiting MAO, and blocking serotonin reuptake.

4. Side Effects

Some drug references refer to this section as “adverse effects”. If the drug you’ve selected for your Rx Report exhausts an entire page of side effects, only list the top 15-20 side effects. References will typically list the most frequent occurring side effect first and will follow with a sequence of side effects according to decreasing order of frequency.

5. Dosage and Administration

Indicate the dosage range of the drug and its commercially available dosage form (capsules, injection, inhaler, suppository, etc...). Some drugs are administered in various “routes of administration”. Illicit drugs are also taken in certain dosages and formulations. For example, the typical dose of LSD is usually 30 mcg in oral form (blotter paper or gelatin squares).

6. Cost

Based on the average dosage and frequency of administration, determine a 30-day supply of the drug. Then call a pharmacy to ask for the brand and generic (if available) cost of the drug. For example, since Prozac is usually given as a 20 mg capsule once daily, a 30-day supply would require 30 capsules. Therefore, when calling a pharmacy, request for a price for 30 capsules of Prozac 20 mg in brand and generic forms. If you’re writing about an illicit drug in your Rx Report, the NIDA will sometimes offer a range of “street prices”. If the NIDA site doesn’t indicate a cost factor, indicate “not available”.

7. Precautions

Precautions or “warnings” will caution the individual about the use of the drug “prior to use”. For example, since narcotics like Vicodin may cause drowsiness, pharmacists and the literature will caution patients about the drug’s potential to reduce alertness during activities which may require attentiveness (e.g., driving, operating dangerous machinery, etc...)

8. Drug-Drug Interactions (or Drug-Food Interactions)

There are many potential drug-drug interactions that may occur when a drug is taken concurrently with other drugs. List the most significant “drug-drug interactions”, which are usually listed in sequence from most detrimental (i.e., most significant) to minor risk potential. Some drugs will also carry risk of “drug-food interaction”. If your drug reference states that a drug-food interaction exists, please list it under this section.

B. Page 2: Your Assessment of the Drug

In this section of the Rx Report you have 3 options (listed below). This section must be in narrative form, as if you are having a conversation with me about how you feel (favorable or not) about the status of the drug. You must justify your position with explanations. This section must be a full page to qualify for credit. It is acceptable to break into a 3rd page if you need some more space to complete your discussion.

Choose one of the following options for Page 2:

1. OPTION 1

You may write a narrative discussion comparing the advantages and disadvantages of the drug (“Pro vs Con”); then indicate your overall position, whether favorable or opposed, to the use of the drug either for medical or other uses. For example, you may begin this page by writing, “I think Prozac is an excellent drug because it successfully improves symptoms in 85% of clinically depressed patients. However, impotence is a common side effect, which may interfere with the patient’s compliance, etc....).”

2. OPTION 2

You may write about your “PAST” experience under the influence of a drug, medical or illicit. If you used the drug medically under the supervision of a physician, you may describe how the drug affected you and whether you believe it has clinical value. Alternatively, you may write about an experience you had, IN THE PAST, on an illicit drug. Some students, in previous semesters, described their previous experiences on Ecstasy at a rave concert.

PLEASE NOTE: If your option is to write about your experience under the influence of an illicit drug, this DOES NOT mean that you must use the drug to complete this assignment. “Option 2” is only acceptable if you had an experience with the drug in your past (i.e., prior to taking this course).

B. Page 2: Your Assessment of the Drug (continued)**3. OPTION 3**

You may interview a friend, colleague, etc... and write about the "PAST" experience he/she had under the influence of the drug, medical or illicit. Offer the same information in this option as described in "Option 2" stated above.
