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## Ritalin use is on the rise

Production of the drug Ritalin (a Novartis product) has increased ten-fold over the past decade, yet "Fidgety Phil" isn't the only taker. Originally prescribed to children considered to be hyperactive, Ritalin is more and more used as a doping agent.

Earlier, children were diagnosed with Organic Psycho Syndrome; today the problem is called Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The new term is more accurate because these children have trouble concentrating, are very impulsive and tend to start a number of projects without finishing them. This behaviour is often perceived as hyperactivity.

It isn't a new phenomenon; even in 1845, children's book author Heinrich Hoffmann described a cheeky character called "Fidgety Philipp". Today, Ritalin is administered to children with ADHD so that they can focus better without getting distracted so easily.

What is relatively new is the fact that the drug is now also prescribed to adults. The syndrome, contrary to what was originally believed, usually doesn't go away during adolescence. But in adults it tends to be inattentiveness that is the problem rather than hyperactivity.

Non-ADHD sufferers also account for the increase in Ritalin consumption. Students use it as a stimulant because they are convinced that it helps them get through intense periods of study. One has to wonder, however, whether society demands such a high level of performance that people somehow feel the need to take a drug.

Ritalin use as party drug is not very high. It wakes you up, but a similar effect can also be achieved through the consumption of coffee or energy drinks.

*from swissinfo*

## Ritalin

The active ingredient Methylphenidate was first synthesized in 1944 by Leandro Panizzon, who was employed by the Swiss chemical company Ciba (now Novartis). At that time it was customary for drug developers to test the effects of new drugs on themselves, which is what Panizzon and his wife Marguerite, also known as Rita, did. Rita was very pleased with the drug because it improved her tennis game. So the drug was named after her: Ritalin. It has been sold on the German-speaking market since 1954. Methylphenidate is a psychostimulant that eliminates fatigue and inhibitions. In addition, it increases short-term physical performance and dampens warning signs such as muscle pain. It also inhibits the appetite and creates euphoria. Used over the long term, Ritalin has addictive potential, but without physical dependence. Some athletes use Ritalin as a doping agent.

## Christmas cards kept Swiss Post busy

Swiss seasonal letters and cards were sent in their millions in 2010, with post offices handling double the usual volume in the last two weeks of the year.

Around 20 million items were processed daily between mid December and the end of the month, about the same as in the previous years.

"Letters will not disappear, despite of text messages, email and electronic chat forums," Swiss Post said, adding that its sorting centres had been operating at near full capacity during the festive season.

Swiss Post handled around 2.5 billion letters during the entire year.

*from swissinfo*

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