

Cognitive enhancement and increasing Ritalin in use in the Netherlands: empirical and ethical perspectives

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Abstract: The use of cognitive enhancers, especially by students and academics, has given rise to heated ethical debates. After a brief overview of this debate, I will report on recent empirical research regarding the actual use of such cognitive enhancers, as well as public opinions about enhancers, in the Netherlands. Interestingly, while in Dutch the public debate cognitive enhancement is not a very big topic, there has been much critical discussion about the rising use of Ritalin by children diagnosed with ADHD. I will argue that in some important respects the ethical arguments surrounding both topics are very similar.

Bio: Maartje Schermer, MD, PhD, holds the Civis Mundi chair in Philosophy of Medicine at the department of Medical Ethics at ErasmusMC University Medical Center in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. She is vice-chair of the standing committee on Ethics and Law of the Dutch Health Council, and chair of the Dutch Society for Philosophy and Medicine. Her main research interests are in neuroethics and human enhancement.