CONSUMPTION OF TRANQUILIZERS AND STIMULANTS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS ATTENDING THE SCHOOL OF CHEMICAL SCIENCES AT CORDOBA (ARGENTINA).

Armando P¹, Virgolini M¹,², Cancela L¹,².
¹Departament of Pharmacology. ²IFEC-CONICET. School of Chemical Sciences, National University of Córdoba.
Haya de la Torre y Medina Allende s/n, Ciudad Universitaria, Córdoba (Argentina) CP: 5000.

INTRODUCTION
Both licit and illicit drug intake is a public health problem worldwide that affects the entire population, with an early onset, usually at the adolescence and young adulthood (1,2). College students do not escape to this problem, which transcends from the individual to the collective space, affecting both, the society and its structures (3-7). Therefore, the epidemiological study of the student population is a first step to design or improve future prevention and/or intervention programs about drug use (8). The aim of this study is to estimate the magnitude of the consumption of tranquilizers and stimulants in the student population attending the School of Chemical Sciences (UNC) during 2009.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
A descriptive cross-sectional study, using a self-administered questionnaire. A random sample of 400 students was obtained, stratified by sex and college grades. An online standardized and previously evaluated questionnaire, designed by the Inter-American Observatory on Drugs (OID) for university students was applied (8). It included several modules, one of them aimed to the drugs under study. In accordance to the test, drug intake was measured as the lifetime prevalence (the number consumption across the lifetime), and the annual and monthly prevalence (amount and frequency of consumption within the month). Data analysis was performed using SPSS 15.0.

RESULTS
A total of 203 students answered the questionnaire (50.1% of the total), 70.9% were female, with and average age of 23.1 ± 4.6 year-old (range 18-46), and 92.1% of the students were single.
Regarding the use of tranquilizers, 21.7% reported having consumed them at some time in their lives. From this percentage, 54.5% answered they consumed only by prescription, while 38.6% did so on their own. In addition, a 1.5% reported recent use (sometime during the past year), while current use was reported of 0.5%, in both cases without a medical prescription.
In relation to stimulants, 3.0% answered having consumed them sometime in their life. Also, while 66.7% said the consumption was on their own, a 33.3% did so under medical prescription. In this case, both the recent and the current use was zero (0.0%).

CONCLUSIONS
The results of this study provide interesting data about the problem of tranquilizers and stimulant drugs consumption in an undergraduate student population. Given the lack of studies of this nature, and although this research has limitations, the results obtained in terms of prevalence are lower than those of other countries in the region (8,9). This could be the result of a greater awareness of the harm and risk associated to the consumption of these drugs among students, which would act as a persuasive element, explaining in part the low intake (3,5,6). However, it is crucial to implement prevention strategies, as well as to provide information related to use of psychoactive substances, strengthening the formal education about the risks given that risk perception is one of the most important protective factors to prevent drug abuse (6).

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REFERENCES.

* Corresponding author. Tel +54 351 4334437, fax +54 351 4334420; e-mail: parman@fcq.unc.edu.ar