

Waking up to sleepiness: Modafinil, the media and the pharmaceuticalisation of everyday/night life.

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Abstract

This paper examines the social construction of the new wakefulness-promoting drug Modafinil (brand name Provigil) in the British press. Key themes in this newspaper coverage include the potential 'uses' and 'abuses' of this drug in relation to: (i) medical conditions; (ii) lifestyle choices; (iii) military operations; and (iv) sporting competition. The British press, we show, play a dual role in reporting on these trends and developments: on the one hand constructing this as something of a 'wonder drug' in relation to the treatment of a number of medical complaints or conditions, on the other hand articulating and amplifying a range of cultural concerns and anxieties about the non-medical 'uses' and 'abuses' of this drug, both now and in the future. These issues, it is argued, are best interpreted in terms of media concerns over the pharmaceuticalisation rather than the medicalisation of everyday/night life. The paper concludes with some further thoughts and reflections on these issues, including the potential reworking of notions of 'pharmaceutical Calvinism' and the 'elective affinity' between this 'smart' new drug and the spirit of (bio)capitalism. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2009 APA, all rights reserved) (from the journal abstract)

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