An Ethnological Retrospective
by Foolish Freshman

Dose: T+ 0:00  300 mg  oral  Pseudoephedrine  daily

Body weight: 180 lbs

After reviewing many online trip reports over a significant amount of time, I have only felt compelled to submit an entry on a couple of occasions. This particular missive I have decided to write for a couple of reasons: For one, there isn’t much in the way of comprehensive ephedrine or pseudo-ephedrine related articles; and secondly, I have encountered far too many wet-behind-the-ears college undergrads (or more simply, young people who want to stay awake) who are as ill-informed about the world of stimulants as is possible, and would benefit from reading this.

Quickly, a bit of background information: I recently graduated from an accredited and fairly affluent university, and am now in the process of joining the workforce. The 4.5 years spent at university could be considered similar to many others’ experiences: eye-opening, excessive, and fraught with infrequent yet intense all-night study sessions before anticipated exams. It was during the beginning of my sophomore year at school that I was introduced to pseudoephedrine as a study-aid, and through this, found an extremely helpful (if at times, insidiously powerful) study tool.

Prior to my introduction to pseudoephedrine, I had only experience with no-doze and soda as a study aid on long nights. Let it also be known simply for further depth, that I was a fairly avid partier in high school, with drinking and herb smoking as my primary staple-goods. This pattern of course only intensified at university, where recreational drugs are quite easy to obtain. The pseudoephedrine I would obtain at the supermarket were often off-brand names (marginally less expensive) such as Suphedrine, Wal-Fed, and the like. It contained 30 milligrams of pseudoephedrine HCl, and nothing else. (This is important, as acetaminophen and the like cause liver damage in higher doses). The clinical dose is 2 tablets (60 mg) over the course of 4 hours.

At the beginning of my affair with pseudo E, it was carefully controlled and regimented (as is the case with most people and their sub-use) I would take 3 or 4 right away, sip on a cup of coffee and water (always important to have water around, as stimulants dehydrate one) and go about my studying. This would continue usually for about 4 hours or so, and then I would usually go to bed, or if more was to be done, I would simply pop another 1 or 2 and continue for another hour or so. Of course, this was only done when serious studying or test-cramming needed to be done, so I was able to only use it when I needed to, which would usually be once every 3 weeks or so.

Gradually, however as my frequency of partying increased, so did my procrastination (gee, what a strange symbiotic relationship)…I was slowly beginning to take on more and more homework material at once, and of course, when those little red devils are just sitting there in their package,
popping 2 or 3 every so often became less and less difficult to abstain from. By finals at the end of my sophomore year, I was taking 10 to 12 tablets (300 to 360 mg) of Pseudo E per cram session (which was still around once every 3 weeks or so).

It was at this time that I began to notice subtle changes in my overall state of consciousness while studying. 4 or 5 pills would give me a pleasurable “buzzy” feeling in my face and head, coupled with a stimulated euphoric sense of being “in control” of the material that I was working on with regard to the time constraints I was working under. However, as I upped the dose past the 300 mg range over the course of several hours, I began to sense a “cumulative” effect with the Pseudo E that I was taking. Every 90 minutes or so, there would be a slight lag in my overall mental state. To combat that, I would simply pop 2 or 3 more, and continue for another hour or two before another dose. Toward the end of the night (which was usually around 3 or 4 a.m.) I would notice small visual and auditory changes. Sounds would appear to be more metallic and “sharp” than before, and my visual field would flatten slightly as the room would seem to be more dimly lit, and the area between light and dark became more stark, revealing shadows I had never noticed before.

Of course, these were merely side-effects, and I would disregard them as such in the face of the essays, research papers, or study guides I’d be working through at the time. By the time mid-terms crept up in my junior year, I was fully relying on Pseudo to work as a tool/companion with me to crank out the quality of scholarly work that had come to be expected of me from my professors. I was now pulling all-nighters writing papers for morning classes, and with 400 mg of Pseudo in my system, I certainly wasn’t going to be napping from 6:25 a.m. until my 8 o’clock class. So, I began a ritual of smoking herb between the amount of time betwixt my all-nighter, and my class to simply kill the monotony. I’d wander to class, turn in my paper, and sit there in a stoned/spun stupor for the duration of the class period, then leave and crash for hours and hours, waking up barely able to recall what had transpired in the previous day.

Finally, one fateful 36 hours during finals of my junior year, my friend Pseudo decided that she’d had enough of my demands on her. I had 2x 10-page final scholarly essays to compose, and only a small amount of time to do it in. As the tablets constantly went down, and as my mind raced and the keyboard struggled to keep up, my mind began wandering along a strange bend, and I found myself grappling with strange elaborate concepts that didn’t seem to have anything to do with the papers I was composing. The last time I’d checked, it was two in the morning, and it didn’t seem like much time had passed, but damn, there was a hell of a lot of traffic in the computer lab at this time of night. I decided to walk over to the backdoor and open it to let the cool night air in. I was greeted by the mesmerizing and intense glair of the sun, fairly high-over-head. It was 9:26 in the morning, and my papers were due by 10.

As I haphazardly finished the last of the two, printed the works-cited page, and ran out onto campus to hand them in, strange things began to take place. The shadows that had been so subtle in my dorm room in days past were now taking the form of very dark apparitions along the walls of buildings on the campus, inside as well as out. As I studied the shadows, they seemed to breathe and morph back and forth as though they were alive. I would hear a group of gals walking and
talking 20 yards away from me, and suddenly they would pass me, and their voices would still be ringing in my ears as though they were right next to me again.

When I sat down for the 50 minute class period after my essay was turned in, I could scarcely take all of the external stimuli around me. Shadows were everywhere. If someone would turn their head to say something, their shadow would completely shift around, as though their “guardian angel” were orbiting them. Now, I don’t want to give the impression that I actually believed in the psychedelia of what was going on around me, as I knew it had to do with sleep deprivation and pseudo, but I was still genuinely daunted and a bit worried about this strange reaction, and began to fret about the abuse I had done to my body the past zillion study sessions of my collegiate career. There was this intense buzzing/frying feeling atop my head, as though it were a skillet that my brain was frying in. Even my arms and legs felt a strange metallic/alkaloid shooting feeling of powerful central nervous stimulants coursing through my very being.

Somehow I was able to get out of class and get back to my dorm. I figured a cold shower would calm me down a bit, so I partook. It was then that the culmination of this strange “trip” happened: I was looking down at my lower torso, preparing to soap and lather up, and in my peripheral vision, there was a small sponge in the corner of the shower. As I continued to lather, it turned into a breathing, fluxuating massive insect of some kind, that seemed to be oozing its way toward me from the corner of the shower. Again, in my mind I knew that this wasn’t real, and recalling reading up on people being strung out and such, I was able to quell myself into a calm state. But in all honesty, I was indeed strung out, and as I exited the shower, I noticed that every tiny piece of lint on the floor, and every mole or freckle on my arm, resembled tiny insects that were moving about in unison.

I would like to say that was my last go-round with Pseudo E, but of course, that would be a lie. My senior year at school, I partook a handful of occasions, never exceeding more than 4 or 5 tablets in a night once again (it seems I was back to where I started again). And now that I am out of school, I don’t have much of a reason to get amped up to that degree anymore, so it seems I’ve meandered away from the substance to a near absolute degree. If I’m able to stress one overarching point, its that something as benign as Pseudoephedrine can be quite powerful if taken in larger doses. For every little bit I come down (or think I’m coming down), I feel the need to amp twice as much as what I know is necessary. For every 30 milligrams I felt that I lost, I would take 120 more. Throughout a 16 hour period, I was so involved in the work and progress that I didn’t assess my physical condition. That one fateful day, I was so into my own essay-composing world that I didn’t even notice the massive change in my consciousness. I couldn’t believe the sun was up, let alone THAT far up (9:26 a.m.) I remember the following day (I slept for 15 hours) my skin was blotchy and red from dehydration, and even more abhorrent, I had canker-sores on my gums from basically living and breathing that particular substance for a day-and-a-half.

In all honesty, Pseudoephedrine is a very helpful study tool, and I owe it some credit for getting me to where I ended up (with a diploma, thank Christ). But stimulants must be taken seriously, as they are powerful. Using the substance as a small additional-means to help me achieve that end was one thing, but I should not have let the substance become an end unto itself. By saying “Oh,
I’ll just take a shitload of Pseudo, and the paper will write itself!” I was writing yourself into a heart palpitating, paranoid, semi-lucid hell of a day. Not to mention the essay I wrote might have been shitty, too.