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Prescription pills are Britain's third biggest killer: Side-effects of drugs taken for insomnia and anxiety kill thousands. Why do doctors hand them out like Smarties?

- 80 million prescriptions for psychiatric drugs are written in UK every year
- Psychiatric drugs are the third major killer after heart disease and cancer
- Professor Gøtzsche reveals the scale of the issue in a new book
- Luke Montagu, 45, heir to the Earl of Sandwich, was wrongly prescribed antidepressants which took him seven years to detox from

By [PROFESSOR PETER GØTZSCHE FOR THE DAILY MAIL](#)

PUBLISHED: 02:10 BST, 15 September 2015 | **UPDATED:** 10:22 BST, 15 September 2015

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Soaring drug use, a growing number of addicts, far too few clinics to treat them and a rising death toll. This might sound like a scene from an impoverished country run by drug cartels - but it is, in fact, the day-to-day reality for NHS patients who are prescribed psychiatric drugs to treat anxiety, insomnia and depression.

More than 80 million prescriptions for psychiatric drugs are written in the UK every year. Not only are these drugs often entirely unnecessary and ineffective, but they can also turn patients into addicts, cause crippling side-effects - and kill.

For instance, antipsychotics, commonly given to dementia patients to keep them quiet, raise the risk of heart disease, diabetes and stroke. Psychiatric drugs also make falls more likely, and breaking a hip can shorten life significantly, while some antidepressants are linked to a potentially deadly irregular heartbeat.

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Psychiatric drugs make falls more likely, and breaking a hip can shorten life significantly, while some antidepressants are linked to a potentially deadly irregular heartbeat

Insomnia explained: What to do when you can't sleep

And the death toll from these pills has been grossly underestimated. As I reveal in a new book, *Deadly Psychiatry And Organised Denial*, the true figure is terrifying: according to my calculations, based on data from published and unpublished sources, for psychiatric drugs are the third major killer after heart disease and cancer.

after Georgia rejects newbie Jordan's advances



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Went almost entirely nude on the cover

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As an investigator for the independent Cochrane Collaboration - an international body that assesses medical research - my role is to look forensically at the evidence for treatments.

Previously this has led to me challenging widely-held assumptions about the benefits of breast cancer screening (I've calculated that every year in the UK, thousands of women undergo unnecessary treatment because of overdiagnosis), GP health MOTs, and the advice for cutting asthma attacks by using special mattress covers.

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All these have certainly ruffled feathers, but what I've discovered about the damage caused by psychiatric drugs far outweighs anything else I've identified.

In fact, the data on all this is available if you know where to look, but I'm the first person to pull it all together - for instance, finding that the number of suicides among adults and children taking antidepressant drugs is actually 15 times greater than the number calculated by the U.S. drugs watchdog, the Food and Drug Administration.

Yet psychiatrists and GPs generally ignore or deny the appalling scale of this damage from drugs that are all too often used without medical justification.

Just this month, for instance, a study published in the BMJ found that thousands of people in England with learning difficulties are routinely prescribed antipsychotic drugs: these drugs do nothing to help these patients but are used as a chemical cosh.



Claims by psychiatrists that the drugs do work have to be taken with a pinch of salt

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► **Eva Green** cuts a sophisticated figure in green velvet skirt with daring thigh high split as she attends the BVLGARI party in Rome. Revealed her leg



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► **Lady Kitty Spencer** commands attention in an elaborate ruffle dress as she attends the BVLGARI party in Rome. The niece of the late Princess Diana



► **Hollywood royalty** steps in for the Queen: Angelina Jolie dazzles at dedication service at St Paul's Cathedral after Her Majesty is forced to pull out through illness



► **Anna Friel** showcases her effortless style in ruffled silk blouse and skinny jeans at circus launch. Looked fashionable as she watched the show



► **Cheryl PICTURE EXCLUSIVE:** Singer goes braless in a slinky lime gown at charity event... after not being seen with beau Liam Payne in FOUR months



I was alerted to the failings of psychiatric drugs eight years ago when one of my postgraduate students suggested an idea for her PhD thesis: 'Why is history repeating itself? A study on benzodiazepines and antidepressants.'

She explained she'd discovered that popular tranquilisers such as Valium (a benzodiazepine drug more popularly known as 'mother's little helper'), and before that the barbiturates, had been described as very safe when first introduced, but then turned out to be highly addictive.

When selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (antidepressants known as SSRIs) came on the market 20 years ago, their big selling point was that they were non-addictive. That proved just as wrong.

I decided to dig deeply into this area, and currently have three PhD students investigating what psychiatric drugs really do to people.

What we have found is truly astonishing. Doctors dispense them in large numbers because they believe drug trials show them to be effective, but the evidence is based on poor science.

More than 80 million prescriptions for psychiatric drugs are written in the UK every year

The skeletons in this closet have been tumbling out at an alarming rate. Sleeping pills, for instance, stop being beneficial after a couple of weeks, yet patients are left on them for years, while antipsychotics are licensed if they show an effect in two placebo trials, no matter how small that effect is.

One reason why doctors have got it so wrong is a fatal flaw in the way the trials are done. No one is supposed to know which group is given the drug and which the placebo.

But in the trials it's widely known who's on a psychiatric drug because they cause definite side-effects such as nausea and dry mouth. The medics, whose account of how patients responded is used to judge how effective the treatment is, tend to report better results from the drug group, but these results are skewed by the fact that they knew the real drug had been given.

We know this happens because an analysis of trials by Cochrane Collaboration found when the placebo was designed to cause similar side-effects to the drug, the psychiatrists reported just as good results from both groups.

In other words, the drug was found to be no more effective than the placebo.

Claims by psychiatrists that the drugs do work have to be taken with a pinch of salt, not only because good evidence suggests they don't, but also because those who run the trials almost always receive funding from drug companies.

1 IN 11

The proportion of adults thought to be taking an antidepressant

Based on the same sort of flawed trials, antidepressants are also being handed out for conditions such as binge eating, panic disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder and menopausal symptoms.

The claimed benefits can be ludicrously small, for instance: they cut the rate of hot flushes from ten to nine a day.

Yet despite the lack of good evidence for their benefits, 57 million prescriptions for

Ariana Grande rocks black bra as Pete Davidson wears mask for shopping spree before packing on the PDA
Out and about



Lydia Bright puts on a leggy display in pastel mint coloured shorts and matching blazer as she leaves ITN studios
She is a boutique owner and all-around style icon



Karrueche Tran shows off her figure in bronze bikini as she larks about with pals in Mexico
Hung out with pals at a luxurious resort on Thursday



Robbie Williams believes he has Asperger syndrome as he reveals 'there's something missing in me'
On the autistic spectrum



Wayne Rooney finds a pub in Washington DC so he could watch England play in the World Cup
His thoughts were on England's crunch clash



Danny Dyer calls David Cameron a 'f***' as he discusses Brexit with Jeremy Corbyn on Good Evening Britain
Brought up politics on Thursday evening



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Hilaria Baldwin strips down to her underwear for a workout after giving birth to Romeo six weeks ago
Following the arrival of her fourth child



Tristan Thompson reveals Khloe Kardashian has the passcode to his iPhone in wake of cheating scandal
Under lock and key



Kardashian-Jenner

Yet despite the lack of good evidence for their benefits, 57 million prescriptions for antidepressants are handed out a year in England alone - and patients are left on them for years.

One reason why drug use is steadily expanding is that there is no chemical marker to diagnose depression or anxiety. So everyday changes in mood, such as feeling less happy or more anxious, can be a reason for treatment.

Most of us could get one or more psychiatric diagnoses if we consulted a psychiatrist or GP.

A successful treatment for depression would allow people to lead more normal lives - go back to work, salvage relationships. But in all the thousands of trials, I've never seen evidence that antidepressants can do this.

Some patients may become a little euphoric or even manic on them, but in patient surveys many report feeling worse, saying the pills change their personality, and not in a good way; they may show less interest in other people and report feeling emotionally numb. 'Like living under a cheese dish cover,' is a typical description patients use.

Sexual function fades; libido drops in half of patients and half can't orgasm or ejaculate. So antidepressants are not likely to save intimate relationships - they are more likely to destroy them.

When I gave a talk to Australian child psychiatrists, one of them said he knew three teenagers taking antidepressants who had attempted suicide because they couldn't get an erection the first time they tried to have sex.

These boys didn't know it was the pills - they thought there was something wrong with them. Although many psychiatrists still believe SSRIs cut the risk of suicide that can come with depression, it is well established that these drugs actually increase the risk in children and adolescents, and most likely in adults as well.

Despite the lack of a chemical marker for any psychiatric disorder, psychiatrists frequently claim the drugs work by correcting a chemical imbalance in the brain.

They say it's like insulin and diabetes - patients can't make enough serotonin. I've been told by a professor of psychiatry that stopping an antidepressant would be like taking insulin from a diabetic.

But it's nonsense - no one has found that depressed people have less serotonin in their brains, for instance - in fact, some antidepressants actually lower serotonin.

This fairy tale has proved very damaging and can lead to patients becoming addicted. They are given more pills or a stronger dose in the hope that the 'imbalance' will be fixed, and can be on them for years.

When they try to come off the pills and experience very unpleasant side-effects, patients say they are told their symptoms are the result of their illness coming back.

This ignores the fact that the drugs' withdrawal effects can mimic the symptoms of psychiatric disorders. It also doesn't fit in with what happens when patients in

A successful treatment for depression would allow people to lead more normal lives - go back to work, salvage relationships. But in all the thousands of trials, I've never seen evidence that antidepressants can do this

Longtime makeup artist Joyce Bonelli
Have parted ways long-time makeup artist Joyce Bonelli



Liam Payne hints One Direction WILL get back together... but reveals their highly-anticipated reunion won't happen for another two years due to his schedule



Love Island makes TV history as Zara and Eyal's dumping becomes the most watched programme EVER on ITV2
Hugely popular



Love Island's Niall Aslam breaks his silence two weeks on from shock villa departure to reveal secret battle with Asperger syndrome



Love Island SPOILER: 'Remorseful' Jack comes face to face with his ex as they discuss 'unfinished business'... as he and 'worried' Dani are forced apart



Love Island's Cally Jane Beech parties in London as she's seen for the first time since suffering 'mild injuries' in 'horrid' car accident
Night out



Denise Van Outen, 44, displays her chic style in mixed print maxi alongside Davina McCall, 50, at ITV Studios
Looked incredible



Being a mother? It's ten times harder than Jamie's job, says the TV chef's 43-year-old wife Jools Oliver... who isn't ruling out another baby
Speaking out



Fabulous at 45! Brandi Glanville shows off her lean body while prancing around the beach in tiny bikini
Showed she's still got it on Wednesday



Kourtney Kardashian gives her bikini a break to flaunt her abs with the help of bandeau top during Capri vacation
Showed off her incredible curves



Kylie Jenner's very unusual arrangement revealed: BFF lives with her... but baby daddy doesn't
Welcomed baby Stormi in



desperation reach for the drugs again: within a few hours they can be feeling better. Real depression doesn't fade that fast.

Doctors' misconceptions about the drugs they prescribe are turning temporary problems into chronic ones.

New test can reveal if you are likely to suffer from depression



More than one million people in the UK are addicted to sleeping pills and anti-anxiety drugs, according to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Involuntary Tranquiliser Addiction, even though for years official advice has been to not prescribe them for longer than four weeks.

Patient surveys reveal that similarly large numbers are having problems withdrawing from antidepressants. The case of Luke Montagu, told below, is a vivid and horrifying example of the destruction antidepressants and benzodiazepines can cause.

He still suffers from the crippling effects of withdrawal seven years after coming off the drugs, which he should never have been prescribed in the first place.

the NHS does almost nothing to help these victims. There are disgracefully few facilities to treat them - fewer than ten in the whole country, and all these are run by small charities, some of which are closing due to lack of funding.

We need to educate doctors so they know how these drugs really work, and show them how to help patients stop taking the pills (by very gently reducing the dose).

According to my calculations, if psychiatric drugs were only prescribed for a few weeks in acute situations, we would only need 2 per cent of the prescriptions written at the moment for insomnia, depression and anxiety. The saving in human and financial terms would be enormous.

Later this week, I will be speaking at a major conference on how we can reduce the use of these drugs, More Harm than Good: Confronting The Psychiatric Medication Epidemic, which has been arranged by the Council for Evidence-based Psychiatry at the University of Roehampton in London.

My proposal is to start a campaign to Just Say No - it is time for a war on psychiatric drugs.

February

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The singer launched her residency in Vegas on Wednesday



► **Lady Gaga goes wild in leopard print as she holds hands with fiancé Christian Carino**

Stepped out together in New York City on Thursday



► **Heidi Klum, 45, looks youthful as she goes braless in silky red dress that makes the most of her summer tan**

Was dazzling once on Thursday



► **Amy Adams looks red hot as she reveals her beauty secrets on GMA while promoting new series**

Stopped by the morning show



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► **Kerry Katona flaunts her slender pins in ripped denim hotpants as she attends single launch**

Commanded attention at the event



► **Johnny Depp receives a gingerbread heart as he flies out of Munich... amid claims his son Jack is suffering from a 'serious health problem'**

Departing Germany



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Has set his sights on chart success



► **Mel B is accused of asking a friend to harm ex Stephen Belafonte two months after their bitter divorce... as singer is granted a restraining order**



► **Yolanda Hadid, 54, looks fit in bikini bottoms as she says she's no longer worried about the 'judgement of others'**

Confident



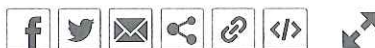
As told to JEROME BURNE

Peter Gøtzsche is a specialist in internal medicine and professor in clinical research design and analysis at the University of Copenhagen. His new book, *Deadly Psychiatry And Organised Denial*, is published by People's Press. Visit deadlymedicines.dk. The Council for Evidence-based Psychiatry, cepuk.org.

NHS explains the best ways to identify and deal with anxiety



0:00 / 0:00



FACT BOX TITLE

Luke Montagu, 45, pictured, is heir to the Earl of Sandwich and lives at Mapperton, in Dorset. Last year, the father-of-four founded the Council for Evidence-based Psychiatry to highlight the risks from psychiatric drugs. Here, he describes the devastating effect the pills have had on his life.

When I was 19 I had a sinus operation that left me with headaches and a sense of distance from the world.

I saw my GP after a few weeks, who told me what I now realise is a medical myth - that I had a chemical imbalance in my brain.

The real problem was probably a reaction to the anaesthetic, which might have improved itself if left. But I was prescribed various antidepressants including Prozac. These didn't help so I saw other doctors and psychiatrists, but no one really listened when I suggested it had begun with the operation.

All offered different diagnoses and all gave me drugs. I was prescribed nine different pills in four years.

Although the drugs never made me feel better for long, I reluctantly concluded that I did have something wrong with me - I'd tried to come off the drugs a couple



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Powerhouses Michelle Obama and Kerry Washington seen taking separate exits as they leave from Spago Beverly Hills lunch



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PICTURE EXCLUSIVE: Former TOWIE star slips into khaki bikini as she dotes on her baby Sunday at sunny Marbella poolside



► **Lindsay Lohan sets pulses racing** as she slips her envy-inducing physique into a scanty halterneck bikini during her idyllic break in Mykonos



► **Gwyneth Paltrow covers up in layers of clothes in LA...** after her trainer says at times she can be too healthy The actress stepped out on Thursday



► **Kaley Cuoco keeps it casual** as she cradles her cute dog Ruby on coffee run in LA Showed her love for animals as she carried her pooch



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of times but felt so awful that I went back to them.

I thought I needed the medication, but in fact I was going into withdrawal each time. In 1995, I was given the antidepressant Seroxat and took it for seven years.

When I tried to come off it I felt dizzy and couldn't sleep. I was also in a state of extreme anxiety. These were withdrawal symptoms, but, thinking I was seriously ill, I saw a psychiatrist.

He gave me four new drugs, including the sleeping pill clonazepam. I quickly felt better, not realising I'd become as dependent as a junkie on heroin.

I functioned OK for a few years, but gradually became more and more tired and forgetful. So, in 2009, believing it was due to the drugs, I booked into an addiction clinic.

My psychiatrist advised me to come off the clonazepam right away and within three days I was hit by a tsunami of horrific symptoms - my brain felt like it had been torn in two, there was a high-pitched ringing in my ears and I couldn't think.

I now know this was terrible advice: rapid withdrawal from long-term use of sleeping pills is nearly always a disaster. The detox was the start of nearly seven years of hell. It was as if parts of my brain had been erased.

About three years ago, I very slowly began to recover. I still have a burning pins and needles sensation throughout my body, loud tinnitus and a feeling of intense agitation.

But my mind is back, and I'm determined to try to help others avoid this terrible trap.



Luke Montagu, 45, pictured, is heir to the Earl of Sandwich and lives at Mapperton, in Dorset

England's glamorous WAGs cheer on their men in Belgium clash after bonding during a wild night out
Come on boys!



Vicky Pattison exhibits her perky assets and washboard abs in a skimpy white bikini amid cryptic post about 'needing time alone'
Looking good



Dan Osborne buys gifts for Jacqueline Jossa and their newborn daughter Mia in Kent... after fans warn him not to 'break his wife and kids' hearts



Love Island SPOILER: Josh 'vibes' and flirts with stunning new girl Kazimir... as his loyal partner Georgia rebuffs the advances of hunky model Jordan



Love Island SPOILER: Megan and Wes' romance is ALREADY on the rocks... as both have their heads turned by the 12 new islanders
Who'd have thought it



Gary Oldman's mother Kathleen dies aged 98: Oscar-winning Darkest Hour actor posts tribute to 'a woman of great talent and mirth'
Sad news



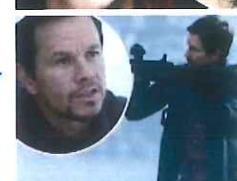
Harrison Ford's return as Indiana Jones for fifth time delayed for lack of finished script
The actor had planned to start filming the movie April 2019



James McAvoy and Jessica Chastain share first images from the set of It: Chapter 2 as filming begins
Set to play Bill Denbrough



Mark Wahlberg stars as CIA operative in action-packed trailer for Mile 22
Choc full of gun battles and dangerous interplay on the city streets



Eddie Murphy pictured in full 1970s garb on set of new movie Dolemite Is My Name
Spotted in Los Angeles filming a scene for his new movie



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The comments below have not been moderated.

Nicole King, Leeds, United Kingdom, 3 years ago

Who wrote this? Someone without a basic grasp of English, it seems. "Psychiatric drugs"? Perhaps the author meant psycho-active drugs, or psychotropic drugs. As it stands, the sentence is nonsense.

Click to rate 12 48

Plah, Newcastle, United Kingdom, 3 years ago

It's all about profit and these corporations and doctors don't give a damn about people's health. Money, Money, Money!

Click to rate 52 2

Diane Cullimore, chapel-en-le-frith, United Kingdom, 3 years ago

My life has been ruined by Seroxat too. I was prescribed them 16 years ago for chronic pain. If I could turn the clocks back I would never have taken them. The drugs company Glaxo lied in their trial results about your body becoming dependant on them. I now have M.E. And have found that severe withdrawal is so dangerous and crippling I can't get off them. There is NO help! I have been battling my dr for years to get support to come off and am still fighting for help. I am mostly in bed because of the M.E. And my life is in tatters. God help anyone struggling to get off these life changing drugs. I've been to hell and back but still fighting. Its so wrong that there is help for illegal drug withdrawal but nothing and I mean nothing for prescription drug dependency and the drugs companies are killing people basically with no come back. The medical profession needs to hang it's head in shame. I know that some Drs don't even recognise severe withdrawal. I am still here to tell the tale. Just.

Click to rate 58 2[2 of 7 replies](#) | [See all replies](#)

drhoward, Slough, 3 years ago

Michael, No problem. I've been called a lot worse than that. Ha Ha!

Click to rate 23 1

Plah, Newcastle, United Kingdom, 3 years ago

I've also been on Seroxat in the past and it's nasty stuff. On a regular basis, try eating lots of raw garlic & ginger, chop them up and put them in a cup of boiling water along with the spices, Turmeric and Paprika. Give it a good stir and drink it. Works wonders.

Click to rate 14 2

rapier, london, 3 years ago

MONEY!

Bamoi in a major TV drama

Will portray professional model Sheila Caffell



BAZ BAMIGBOYE: Lily James lined up to play the ultimate schemer in a stage adaptation of the Bette Davis classic All About Eve

Will play a devious diva



SEBASTIAN SHAKESPEARE: Prejudiced? My kids are black, says Kate Middleton's favourite designer Speaking out

Just what the doctor didn't order... celebrities riding to the rescue: CHRISTOPHER STEVENS reviews last night's TV On The NHS Front Line



Made In Chelsea EXCLUSIVE: Louise Thompson will jet out to Croatia to 'sort out' new young cast who are 'causing havoc' filming summer series



Serena Williams shares a sweet snap of her nine-month-old daughter Alexis on centre court as she prepares to do battle for her eighth trophy



Kendall Jenner and Bella Hadid look like TWIN SISTERS for new fashion photo shoot in NYC

The brunette bombshells looked like sisters



Kylie Jenner is planning Stormi's 'epic' first birthday party as little girl turns five months old Is already organising a massive celebration



Kris Jenner, 62, jumps in swimming pool FULLY CLOTHED to ride a float during Khloe Kardashian's birthday bash Good times



Kellan Lutz shows off his muscles as he and wife Brittany Gonzalez pack on the PDA at LAX Still feeling the love, based on their passionate display



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Kate Hudson's beau Danny Fujikawa rest his hands on her baby bump as they cuddle in a Tuscan garden

Click to rate 30 1

LERENARD, Love n Light, United Kingdom, 3 years ago

Why do doctors hand them out like Smarties? _____ Because they are beholden to the pharmaceutical industry and refuse to consider the natural alternatives due to lack of training and institutional bias.

Click to rate 64 3

alnilam, nothanku, United States Minor Outlying Islands, 3 years ago

that is what you get with socialized medicine. the doctor earns more by volume and the government will only pay just so much. same here with obamacare.

Click to rate 23 13

Portland17, Portland, 3 years ago

Don't think it's really about socialized medicine. It's about psychiatry acting as a GUILD to create more market share by lying and manipulating the public and government. It is an unholy alliance of pharmaceutical companies with the psychiatric profession, who as doctors are able to take advantage of their higher status and trust in the public's eye to give the pharmaceutical companies' propaganda more credibility. Insurance coverage is certainly critical to the game, but whether it's public or private coverage is really not relevant. And all of this started back in about 1980, when Obama was still a starry-eyed twentysomething in Chicago and Ronald Reagan was president.

Click to rate 34 0

gRAEME, abu dhabi, UAE, 3 years ago

Kids these days! When I was 15 going to school in Thailand I could get Xanax, Valium etc at anytime of the day, they even sold them over the counter at the supermarket, I took them occasionally but when you start missing days and weeks of your memory you cut down, in my case I just got bored, I knew what they were for and used them correctly.

Click to rate 11 15

Helena, London, United Kingdom, 3 years ago

Rose, I absolutely agree with you, but when a person's sole topic of conversation is their prescribed opiate, alarm bells should be ringing.

Click to rate 13 1

Flutter, Here, United Kingdom, 3 years ago

Wow. This is a fantastic article for undermining the seriousness of mental health...yet again. No one has ever said they're a cure all for everyone, but for some/a lot of people, they are necessary, useful and make the difference between life and death. That's the truth whether anyone wants to accept it or not. No more than I'd tell someone to take antidepressants, I also wouldn't direct anyone to an article like this with its scaremongering and ability to make someone with a mental health problem feel useless and pathetic.

Click to rate 59 44

drhoward, Slough, 3 years ago

Flutter, This article does not undermine the seriousness of mental health. Nobody is saying these drugs don't have their place, rather that their correct use is important. That means only using them after a correct diagnosis and only using them for a limited period of time. It has been CSM advice that they should only be prescribed for a maximum of 2 to 4 weeks since 1988 and it has largely been ignored by the medical profession. Quite rightly, this article draws attention to this in order to empower those with mental health problems and certainly not to make them feel useless and pathetic.

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Charlotte, London, 3 years ago

I agree completely. Prozac changed my life, once. It was almost too late because my pathetic psychotherapist didn't point out to me that I was depressed (even though it was blindingly obvious). I will never forgive him for that & I will always be grateful to my kind & insightful GP. Yes, SSRIs kill people sexually but the addition of Bupropion

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Daughter of Kim and Kanye West

(wellbutrin/zyban) reverses that side effect completely (available online, everyone!). There's no such thing as a free lunch, but these things work, for a time. Depression doesn't just go away.

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Poppy, E Anglia, 3 years ago

Many people prescribed these medications overuse them. And many people go online to buy medication only obtained in the UK on prescription. Others misuse them by mixing them with other medication. People need to take responsibility for abusing their medication and not checking the side effects and the correct way to take meds.

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Statement from Cochrane

Cochrane has a long tradition of vigorous, open scientific debate that we cherish, and we want to play a constructive role in the current debate on the evidence relating to the benefits and harms of psychiatric drugs, resulting in better health decision-making and patient care. However, Cochrane's ability to take part in the debate is damaged if we are falsely perceived to have taken a partisan position that we do not hold.

In his article 'Prescription pills are Britain's third biggest killer' (*MailOnline*, 15 September 2015) Professor Peter Gøtzsche writes that: 'As an investigator for the independent Cochrane Collaboration – an international body that assesses medical research – my role is to look forensically at the evidence for treatments' and goes on to make a series of statements about the effects of psychiatric drugs and their use by doctors in the UK. These comments could be misconstrued as indicating that Professor Gøtzsche is conducting this work on behalf of Cochrane.

Cochrane wishes to state unequivocally that the views Professor Gøtzsche has expressed on the benefits and harms of psychiatric drugs are not those of the organisation. As primarily a research organization Cochrane does not make clinical recommendations and we have not done so on this issue.

Professor Gøtzsche is an experienced researcher and he is the Director of the Nordic Cochrane Centre. He is free to interpret the evidence as he sees fit. He has an obligation, however, to distinguish sufficiently in public between his own research and that of Cochrane – the organization to which he belongs. There are a wide range of views within Cochrane on the benefits and harms of psychiatric drugs, of which Professor Gøtzsche's is one.

Lisa Bero and Cindy Farquhar, Steering Group Co-Chairs
Mark Wilson, CEO
David Tovey, Editor in Chief

18 September 2015