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Newsletter

JUNE 2013

Antidepressant Awareness

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), depression is the number one mental illness worldwide. Is it any wonder then that literally billions are spent yearly on prescriptions for antidepressant medications? In the U.S. alone, 4.02 billion drug prescriptions were written in 2011; antidepressants were the most-prescribed with a 400% increase in the past decade. In the U.K., there were 9 million prescriptions written for antidepressants in 1991; that jumped to 46.7 million by the end of 2012.

What are Antidepressants?

The definition of antidepressant is anything, especially a drug, used to prevent or treat depression. The most common are selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) such as Prozac, Paxil and Zoloft.

SSRIs are expected to ease depression symptoms by affecting the neurotransmitters that send signals in the brain. SSRIs selectively block the reuptake (or absorption) of serotonin in the brain. This is supposed to change the balance of serotonin in the brain and work as a mood booster.

The second most common antidepressants are norepinephrine and dopamine reuptake inhibitors (NDRIs) such as Wellbutrin, and selective serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SSNRIs) such as Effexor.

Some other antidepressants include monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MOIs), tricyclic and tetracyclic. These were the first type of antidepressants developed and are less commonly prescribed today.

The Problem with Drugs

Clearly the problem with any drugs or chemicals prescribed is that none are without side effects. The most common are nausea, dry mouth, headache and diarrhea, but many patients have reported weight loss or gain, nervousness, agitation, aggression, increased anxiety and even suicidal thoughts.

Since the drugs were prescribed to ease depression symptoms, it's difficult to comprehend the benefit of taking a chemical that increases anxiety, agitation and suicidal thoughts.

In his book, *Alternative Medicine*, Burton Goldberg explains that when serotonin levels increase in the brain they can also act as an excitotoxin causing the brain to react in ways similar to mental illness. Since SSRIs interrupt the absorption of serotonin by the brain, clearly this will increase serotonin levels.

Our Children and Drugs

In 2006, an estimated \$9 billion was spent on 4.6 million children treated for mental disorders in the U.S., making mental illness the most expensive condition to treat in childhood according to a government study published in 2009. However, there were actually more children diagnosed with asthma (at nearly 13 million) than diagnosed with mental disorders. Yet, treating almost 3 times the number of children with asthma cost less (\$8 billion). Clearly psychiatric drugs are a major money maker for pharmaceutical companies.

Today there are more than 17 million children worldwide that have been prescribed psychiatric drugs. Of that, more than 10 million are in the United States.

Children 5 years and younger are the fastest-growing segment of the non-adult population being prescribed antidepressants; children as young as 4-years-old have attempted suicide while taking SSRIs.

Between 1995 and 1999, antidepressant use increased almost 600% in children under the age of 6 and 151% in children between the ages of 7 and 12-years-old.

This problem is not confined to the United States. In Australia,

antidepressant prescription rates for children increased 34 times in the past two decades. In Mexico, the sale of Ritalin has gone up 800% between 1993 and 2001. In Britain, between 1992 and 2000, antidepressant prescriptions for children increased by over 9,000%.

Antidepressant Dangers

The average side effects can be overlooked if a mental disorder is serious enough, but what about the dangerous side effects? 90% of children who commit suicide are taking antidepressants or have been diagnosed with a mental disorder that is being pharmaceutically treated.

Of the 13 school shootings in the United States in the past 10 years, 8 of the shooters were taking antidepressants or some kind of stimulant (Ritalin or Adderall) at the time of the shooting. In 2004, the Federal Drug Administration, in response to this overwhelming evidence and concern ordered that a “black box” label be placed on antidepressants warning that these drugs may contribute to suicide among children and adults.

Consulting a Professional

A National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey for 2005-2008 showed that about 1 in every 10 Americans is taking an antidepressant; women are 2 ½ times more likely to be taking an antidepressant than men. Probably the most disturbing result from this study was that less than a 1/3 of those Americans taking a single antidepressant (as opposed to two or more) have actually consulted with a mental health professional in the past year.

What may be surprising is that research suggests that 70% of all antidepressant prescriptions are being written by a general practitioner or family doctor rather than a licensed psychiatrist or psychologist.

Peter Breggin, M.D., a psychiatrist, medical expert and author, has been a watchdog regarding the underreporting of side effects from antidepressants in the pediatric population. He has been recommending for years that the U.S. follow Great Britain in banning the use of most SSRIs in children and adolescents. Studies showed in 2003 that SSRIs were only helping 1 out of

every 10 children and the risks were far outweighing the benefits. Dr. Breggin recommends that instead of resorting to drugs, “Those struggling with severe depression essentially are feeling profound hopelessness and despair that can be addressed by a variety of psychotherapeutic, educational and spiritual or religious interventions.”

The Chiropractic Factor

The first question to ask ourselves is – why are we a culture where seemingly our body is absent of balance? What is wrong with us physiologically that our depression is on the rise? Your Family Wellness Chiropractor is the only healthcare professional that recognizes the important role that a healthy spine and nervous system plays in not only our overall health but our mental health. If we can resolve the stressors, and not by adding more chemicals, perhaps we can help resolve the depression.

Results from a Practice-Based Research Network showed, that in the pediatric population, Chiropractic Care can actually improve a child’s behavior and/or mood. Many parents report back an improvement in their child’s overall disposition after beginning routine Chiropractic Care.

So, before beginning your child on a chemical regimen, ask for a referral to a psychiatrist and schedule a spinal screening for your child with your Family Wellness Chiropractor.