Joint Statement on Federal Concerns About Psychotropic Medication Safety

March 20, 2025

The safety and efficacy of traditional antidepressants, antipsychotics, and mood stabilizers (such as lithium and some anticonvulsants) and stimulant medications have been established through decades of rigorous research, randomized clinical trials, peer-reviewed studies, meta-analyses, national registry studies of thousands of people, post-marketing pharmacovigilance monitoring, and FDA oversight.

The February 14, 2025, Executive Order 14212, establishing the Make America Healthy Again Commission casts doubt on this research by tasking the Commission with "assessing the prevalence of and threat posed by the prescription of selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), antipsychotics, mood stabilizers, stimulants, and weight-loss drugs."

These drugs provide relief for many young people enabling them to participate fully in treatment, school, social activities, and family life—all key aspects of healthy development. Efforts to discourage, stigmatize, or curtail the use of evidence-based treatments for mental illness will have serious deleterious consequences, particularly for individuals with serious mental illness, their loved ones, and the communities in which they live.

Inaccurate information about the safety and efficacy of FDA-approved psychotropic medications has been amplified by misleading statements that antidepressants are addictive and pose hazards comparable to Schedule I narcotics. Like any medical treatment, psychotropic medications require monitoring. When used appropriately, these medications can stabilize serious mental illness, reduce suffering, shorten periods of disability, and save lives. Physicians work closely with patients and families to assess the risks and benefits of psychopharmacology and monitor for potential side effects, ensuring each patient receives individualized care.

Statistics on youth suicide further underscore the dangers associated with false information about safe treatments. Following the FDA's 2004 boxed warning highlighting the risk for suicidal behavior in younger depressed patients taking serotonin reuptake inhibitors, suicide rates increased, by as much as 60 percent in untreated youth with major depression.[1] Further, post-mortem toxicology studies suggest that many suicide victims with known mental health conditions do not have detectable levels of psychotropic medications in their system, further pointing to the hazard of undertreatment as a modifiable risk factor.[2]

Psychiatric medications are safe, effective, and can be lifesaving if they are taken properly—as directed—under the care of an appropriately licensed healthcare professional. These medications can significantly improve the quality of life for children struggling with mental health conditions, including those at imminent risk of suicide, by helping to alleviate symptoms of depression, mania, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, Tourette's disorder, ADHD, and psychotic illness.

We urge the Federal government and our colleagues within the scientific and practitioner communities not to disregard the critical role played by the appropriate use of evidence-based psychotropic medications in the treatment of individuals with psychiatric conditions that carry inherent high risks for suicide or other dangerous or life-threatening behaviors.

REFERENCES

1. Isacsson G, Ahlner J. Antidepressants and the risk of suicide in young persons—prescription trends and toxicological analyses. *Acta Psychiatr Scand.* 2014;129:296–302.
2. Marzuk PM, Tardiff K, Leon AC, et al. Use of prescription psychotropic drugs among suicide victims in New York City. *Am J Psychiatry.* 1995;152:1520–1522.

American Society of Clinical Psychopharmacology (ASCP)
American College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ACNP)
American Association of Chairs of Departments of Psychiatry (AACDP)
American Psychiatric Association (APA)
National Network of Depression Centers (NNDC)
Society of Biological Psychiatry (SOBP)