

## Are Prescription Drugs Messing with Our Minds?

**J**anet has a full-time job, her son in grade four is getting poor grades, her daughter in grade 10 is belligerent and rebellious, her husband works long hours, and she visits her mother in a nursing home at least once a week. What is the one thing this typical North American family has in common? Her mother takes nine different drugs every day as a routine part of her life in the nursing home; her husband takes antacids to try to quell the ache in his stomach; her daughter is hooked on a diet drug; her son is given Ritalin at school and Janet takes Prozac to help her cope with life. The common denominator for this typical family is they all take drugs on a regular, ongoing basis. Chances are you or someone close to you is part of this drug culture.

Why have so many people turned to drugs to alleviate ailments or to cope with life? What about Janet? After watching the ads on television, she asked her doctor to prescribe Prozac. In addition to advertisements, press releases based on research are broadcast as news, so drug companies get free exposure for their drugs. During a CBC television interview in Canada, the host Peter Mansbridge, commented on the number of media releases the network receives about drug research and the fact this research is broadcast as news. Mansbridge stated, "It seems every week there's a new medical study in the headlines, followed weeks later by other studies that seem to contradict the first findings. What are we supposed to believe? And are journalists being vigilant enough in what they choose to report?" His guest, Richard Smith, former editor of the *British Medical Journal*, explained that pharmaceutical companies who pay for the research tend to get the results they want. The parameters of the studies are controlled to get better results.<sup>1</sup> This is the basis of the information that Janet and others rely on when requesting a specific drug from their doctor.



To compound the problem, everything Janet's doctor knew about Prozac came from the manufacturer. He was quite willing to prescribe the drug to help her. Janet chose what seemed like a quick fix. Janet is struggling, however, as she doesn't feel as calm as she hoped—she struggles with emotional outbursts both at home and at work.

### ***What Didn't the Television Ads and News Reports Reveal?***

Prozac, an antidepressant drug, acts in the brain and intestinal tract to imbalance our hormones by increasing the levels of one particular hormone—serotonin. Is this dangerous? Ann Blake Tracy, a researcher and author explains how imbalances of the serotonin hormone affect us: "We know, through medical research over the last 50 years, that an increase in serotonin is found in psychosis or schizophrenia, mania, mood disorders which include depression, anxiety, organic brain disease, mental retardation, autism and Alzheimer's."<sup>2</sup>

And, there's more. Tracy states the effects of the drugs can create: "... nightmares, hot flushes, migraines, pains around the heart, difficulty breathing, worsening of bronchial complaints, tension and anxiety which appear from out of nowhere, depression, suicide—especially very violent suicide and repeated attempts, hostility, violent crime, arson, substance abuse including cravings for alcohol and other drugs, psychosis, mania, organic brain disease [brain damage], autism, anorexia, reckless driving, Alzheimer's, impulsive behavior with no concern for punishment, and argumentative behavior."<sup>3</sup>

### ***Are antidepressant drugs changing the fabric of our society? Are antidepressant drugs related to escalating violence?***

Tracy cautions, "Unless patients are warned to come very slowly off these drugs by shaving miniscule amounts off their pills each day, ... they can go into terrible withdrawal ..."<sup>2</sup> Extreme acts of violence may result. Peter Breggin, M.D., a maverick psychiatrist who has written several books on the dangers of psychiatric drugs, advises professional help to withdraw safely from the drugs.

Violence in the form of school shooting sprees has escalated in recent times with news reports in Australia, the US and Germany. Evidence is surfacing that the individuals responsible for the mass violence and murder were either using, or were in the process of withdrawing from, a psychiatric drug. One television network has been willing to address the issue. FOX news has exposed the connection by airing several stories and interviews documenting the link between violence and school shootings with psychiatric drugs.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Why don't more of the mainstream media highlight the adverse effects of prescription drug use as news? Perhaps, it is because pharmaceutical company advertising is a major source of revenue for the media.***

## *How Effective are Antidepressant Drugs?*

A team of researchers came to a startling conclusion, after reviewing results of previously unseen drug trials submitted to the FDA by manufacturers. The drugs in question were antidepressants—commonly prescribed to children as well as adults. Antidepressant drugs are known for their potentially serious side-effects such as violence and suicidal feelings. Astonishingly, the researchers discovered that a placebo pill is just as effective as these drugs. In other words, the ingredients of the drugs are not effective; it is the placebo effect of the antidepressant drugs. This was found to be true for mild to moderate depression. The only exception reported the research leader, Dr. Irving Kirsch, is a degree of effectiveness with the most severely depressed.

What is a placebo? While medical science tends to dismiss the placebo effect, it is actually a key aspect of healing. Placebo includes the hope and belief that we will heal. A caring health practitioner is often an important aspect of placebo healing. In drug studies, one test group will get the drug while another test group gets a sugar pill with no medicinal ingredients. Neither the patients nor those administering the medicine know who is getting the drug or sugar pill. When the unpublished drug trials were examined Dr. Kirsch's group concluded: "We find the effect of new generation antidepressant medication is below recommended criteria for clinical significance." This means those who received the sugar pills improved to the same degree as those who were taking the antidepressant drugs.

Recognizing that the drug companies had over-estimated the effectiveness of the antidepressants and under-estimated the side effects, the health system in the UK made a major shift in policy. The shift recognizes that our beliefs and attitude trigger healing responses in our bodies. Antidepressant drugs have successfully been replaced with counseling that includes an exercise program for those suffering from mild to moderate depression. Those suffering from severe depression continue to be treated with the drugs.

The CBS program, 60 Minutes in the US, exposed the research in a segment titled "Treating Depression: Is there a placebo effect?" And a newspaper in the UK published an article titled, "Prozac, used by 40m people, does not work say scientists."

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## *A Crucial Court Decision*

A court case in 1994 against Eli Lilly, the manufacturer of Prozac gives us another insight as to why adverse events don't become common knowledge. Joseph Wesbecker suddenly came off Prozac two days before shooting 20 people. He killed seven people and then killed himself. In court, the prosecution representing the wounded and families of the deceased,

fought to be allowed to bring a prior criminal charge against Eli Lilly forward as evidence—the pharmaceutical giant had failed to report deaths caused by the anti-inflammatory drug Oraflex. After hearing the arguments, the judge ruled in favor of the prosecution—they could introduce the earlier court case as evidence. At this point a recess was called. When the case resumed the prosecution mysteriously said they had no further evidence and rested their case. In reaching a verdict, the jury found Eli Lilly not guilty by only one vote.

At the time this verdict was announced, there were about 160 lawsuits pending against Eli Lilly over the use of Prozac. When they heard the not guilty verdict, most of those lawsuits were dropped.

There's more. What did the television ads now reveal? As a result of this court decision, Eli Lilly went on television saying that their drug had been vindicated, as Prozac was found not guilty.

The judge in the case, however, was irate. John Potter was an honest man. Not only had the prosecution acted strangely in not presenting further evidence but now his courtroom was being used as a marketing ploy. Eli Lilly was using the verdict as part of their advertising for Prozac. The judge decided to investigate. He discovered that during the recess in the court proceedings, Eli Lilly had secretly reached a settlement with the plaintiffs. To avoid publicizing a settlement, however, in addition to receiving a huge sum of money, the plaintiffs agreed to go back into court and produce no further evidence. After the decision, Eli Lilly was free to announce they won the court case. Judge Potter believed the judgment should read that this case was resolved by settlement rather than a jury verdict. He also called for a full and open disclosure of the terms of the settlement as a necessary public safety issue.

Nearly three years later, after three more court cases, Judge Potter won the right to schedule a hearing to take sworn testimony from those involved in the original court case. Three days before the scheduled hearing, Eli Lilly lawyers intervened. As a result, the original verdict was quietly changed. Judge Potter succeeded in uncovering that there had been a collusive settlement. The conclusion of the original court case indicating a jury verdict was changed to an "as settled" verdict.<sup>5</sup> The changed verdict is not widely known as it was not given major media attention.

Finally in 2004, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the US issued a report warning about the increased risk of suicide "... in children taking the newer antidepressants, including the SSRIs (Prozac, Zoloft, Paxil, Luvox, Celexa, and Lexapro) and also Effexor and Wellbutrin (also marketed as Zyban)." One year later, in 2005, the FDA issued a further warning of the possibility of increased suicide in adults treated with antidepressants.<sup>6</sup>

## ***Recognize How the System Works***

We need to recognize how the system works—that government regulatory agencies do

not always have our best interest at heart. At present, the FDA allows the drug companies proprietary rights to all the studies they perform on a drug. This means the drug companies only publicize or use the studies they choose. Peter Breggin, M.D. describes the process: "The public might be shocked to learn ... that the vast majority of studies done for the FDA approval of psychiatric drugs such as Prozac show them to be of no value whatsoever. The companies are allowed to pick out two often marginally or questionably successful studies as 'proof' that the drugs work."<sup>7</sup>

And, the FDA usually adds a warning on their website rather than having the pharmaceutical company withdraw the drug. For example, the FDA brought attention to the caution about the prescription drug taken to help stop smoking: "Chantix was approved by FDA in May 2006. In November 2007, FDA issued an Early Communication to tell the public and health care providers that the agency was evaluating adverse event reports on Chantix related to changes in behavior, agitation, depressed mood, suicidal thoughts, and attempted and completed suicide."<sup>8</sup>

Here's the problem. As a society we rate money above honesty. We allow greed to prevail over ethics. We give the head control over the heart. The result: Plaintiffs accepted a settlement designed to delude millions of people about the safety of Prozac. Television networks succumb to the huge profits from pharmaceutical advertisers rather than broadcast news about the subversion of justice and the dangers of psychiatric drugs. Who wins? No one ... as a society we take a step backward.

What happened to Janet's son? Jason is a bright boy. He has trouble, however, sitting still and concentrating on any one project for long. Janet and her husband were told he suffers from Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). The solution offered for Jason's deficiency is the drug Ritalin. He's much quieter now. His behavior is easier to control. Janet feels she's lost something though—he no longer shows his feelings and seems almost zombie-like at times. Ritalin acts very much like cocaine in its effect on the brain.<sup>8</sup> Of course, Janet and her husband aren't aware of this fact.

### *Documentary Exposé*

*GENERATION Rx is a shocking film ... one that reveals the extent to which our children are being medicated with drugs such as Ritalin. We are taken behind the scenes to reveal the corruption in the pharmaceutical industry—the fraud and serious conflicts of interest—that ultimately allows dangerous drugs to destroy the lives of our children.*

[Watch Trailer](#)

### *Psychiatry Labeling Kids with Bogus Mental Disorders*

*A short video that quickly paints a picture of the labels deeming kids as sick ... kids who don't necessarily conform. The mental disorder labels are replaced with qualities that are needed for creative careers and independent thinking leaders.*

[Watch Video](#)

Janet and her husband have acted voluntarily, yet “State mandated drugging of children as young as three years old is a disturbing yet growing trend,” warns Dr. Peter Breggin, M.D. He also states, “... that no psychiatric drug treatment corrects or improves existing brain dysfunction (such as a biochemical imbalance.)”<sup>9</sup>

## ***Alternatives to Drugs***

What are some alternatives to drugs to deal with behavioral issues? Many studies are showing how behavior is linked to diet. Here are three suggestions recommended by natural health practitioners:

- 1) Include high-quality Omega-3 fats in your diet. Food rich in Omega-3 fats are flax seeds and oils, fish, walnuts and green leafy vegetables.
- 2) Replace processed foods that are high in sugars, food coloring and unhealthy fats, with fresh foods—vegetables, fruits and protein sources—rich in nutrients.
- 3) Avoid exposure to environmental toxins in water, the home, and air if possible. There is mounting evidence about the harmful effects of vaccines as they plant the heavy-metal mercury in the body.

### ***Nutrition Leads to Life-Changing Behavior***

***We don't want to leave the impression that there aren't kids who have serious behavior problems and need help. It has been well-proven, however, that both youth in schools and adults in prison experience life-changing behavior when they consume more nourishing foods as well as avoid processed foods with their many additives.***

***“You do what you eat” by Marco Visscher reveals the change.***

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Let's return to Janet and her family. They are in debt—mortgage, car loan, credit card payments. They spend beyond their means—designer clothes for the kids, newer model car, the latest electronic household equipment, computers, entertainment, and more. And how about their health? The average North American family buys processed foods at super markets and eats at fast food establishments ... these foods offer little nourishment and may actually be poisoning the body. We then wonder why we lack the energy to handle daily challenges. We turn to drugs to help us cope and to help manage our kids.

As a result each member of the family struggles to keep their head above water. We reach for drugs, alcohol, sugar and caffeine instead of stepping back to see the vicious circle we've created.

## Time for Change?

We each must decide our priorities. It takes courage to look at our life and ask some hard questions. If there is a struggle to maintain a lifestyle with designer clothes and the latest computer games for our children, a big mortgage and high payments, and little time for family, is the struggle worth it? If our lifestyle means we leave TV to mind the kids and rely on packaged foods devoid of true nutrients, do our kids and our health suffer? Is it worth it?

We may gain materially while we risk sacrificing our health, our family relationships ... and the love and support that comes with them. Some choose to replace the struggle with different priorities—a lifestyle that allows time to listen to their kids and offer guidance to them on a daily basis, to prepare nourishing meals for health, and to have the energy to deal with the lessons life brings ... without the need to turn to drugs. In the short-term, they may sacrifice materially in order to have the time to offer their family and themselves more love and support. Long-term, they may benefit materially as better health and improved relationships give more energy and quality time to foster creativity and act on innovative or fresh ideas to increase income.

Have you accepted a commercialized standard for a family—a standard that media, advertisers, and peers promote? Are you living beyond your means—a standard that keeps you on a treadmill? Or, is your family working as a team to set priorities that will make each of you happier and healthier?

***Have you taken the time to look inside yourself to discover what makes you happy?***

***Is having and giving more love in your life a priority?***

## References

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3. "Severe Warnings Ordered for ALL Antidepressants," Ann Blake Tracey, <http://www.rense.com/general58/band2.htm>
4. Fox News report by Douglas Kennedy exposing the link between psychiatric drugs and school

### Recommended Reading

***Medication Madness: True Stories of Mayhem, Murder, and Suicide Caused by Psychiatric Drugs,***

*Peter R. Breggin, M.D., 2008.*

*ISBN #13: 9780312363383*

***Prozac, Panacea or Pandora?***

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