

AUSTRALASIAN SCHIZOPHRENIA CONFERENCE

With Australia's Toddlers and Children Already Exposed to Antipsychotic Drug Risks, How Informed are Parents?

There is Australia-wide concern about the increasing numbers of children and toddlers being prescribed psychotropic drugs, especially antipsychotic drugs that can put them at risk of blood disorders, blood-sugar abnormalities, cardiac arrest, confusion, diabetes, liver failure, muscle twitching, pancreatitis (inflammation of pancreas), restlessness or pacing, seizures, convulsions, and **NEUROLEPTIC MALIGNANT SYNDROME**: a potentially fatal toxic reaction where patients break into fevers and become confused, agitated and extremely rigid.

Even worse is that psychiatrists addressing the Australasian Schizophrenia Conference have taken this a dangerous step further, claiming to be able to predict the potential onset of schizophrenia, and subjecting children to antipsychotic drugs without their having the "mental disorder." It's called "**PSYCHOSIS RISK SYNDROME**" and this year it has been the subject of international condemnation from psychiatric peers.

Allen Frances, professor of psychiatry and taskforce chair of the current Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (DSM), called Psychosis Risk Syndrome "ILL CONCEIVED AND POTENTIALLY HARMFUL." Further, "1) it would misidentify many teenagers who are not really at risk for psychosis; 2) the treatment they would most often receive (atypical [new] antipsychotic medication) has no proven efficacy; but, 3) it does have definite dangerous complications."

"Drug company marketing," he added, "would influence parents and clinicians to be especially alert to any strangeness in teenagers." False positives could be as high as 70-90 percent: that means 70-90 out of every 100 youths could be wrongly labelled with PRS. ¹

A leading mental health research group said the practice of drugging someone when they don't have a disorder is akin to "performing mastectomies on women who are at risk of—but do not have—breast cancer." ²

Meetings such as the Australasian Schizophrenia Conference could place even more youths at risk. According to *The Australian*, Chair of the conference, Prof. Vaughan Carr, has applied to screen 80,000 NSW kindergarten kids for mental illness. For 20 years they'll be tracked for at risk of mental disorders, including early markers of schizophrenia, bipolar, and depression. ³

PARENTS HAVE THE RIGHT TO KNOW THE FACTS: While our children may be suffering from real problems in life, and need the best care and advice, few are aware that unlike for medical conditions, psychiatrists frequently do not inform them that there are no blood or urine test, brain scan (MRI, PET scan) or any physical or genetic test to scientifically confirm the existence of the mental disorders children are labelled with. Mental disorders are not like physical diseases.

FUELLING DRUG SALES

Already nearly 10,000 Australian children under 18 are prescribed antipsychotics. There have been 44 incidents of serious weight gain reported linked to these drugs: One 15-year-old boy gained 40 kg. There were also a reported 15 deaths in those up to age 19. **IN 2008, PBS/RPBS PAID \$3.4 MILLION FOR ANTIPSYCHOTICS PRESCRIBED TO CHILDREN ALONE.**

Pharmaceutical company-funded conferences serve to increase drug sales, as does "Psychosis Risk Syndrome." Janssen-Cilag, Eli Lilly, Astra-Zeneca and Lundbeck, all of which make antipsychotics, are sponsoring the Australasian Schizophrenia Conference. ⁴ Prof. Carr is the CEO of the Schizophrenia Research Institute, which Janssen-Cilag is a long time supporter of. Pfizer and Lundbeck have also funded the Institute. This funding is despite Prof. Carr saying in 2004 that there is evidence to suggest that drug-company sponsored clinical trials are 3-4 times more likely than non industry sponsored trials to report results in favour of the company's product. ⁵

MORE ON THE DANGERS OF PSYCHOSIS RISK SYNDROME

PRS was recently discussed at the annual American Psychiatric Congress, which Australian psychiatrists addressed. In fact, Prof. Patrick McGorry who will speak at the public forum of the Schizophrenia Conference is considered a world pioneer in PRS development and “treatment.” Some of his original studies were funded by Janssen. McGorry has received unrestricted research grants from Janssen-Cilag, Eli Lilly, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Astra-Zeneca, Pfizer and Novartis and has acted as a paid consultant for, and has received speaker’s fees and travel reimbursement from all or most of these companies.⁶

- Melissa Raven, psychiatric epidemiologist and policy analyst, and adjunct lecturer in Public Health at Flinders University, South Australia, wrote earlier this year: “McGorry’s campaign is part of a wider push to promote the medicalisation of mental health (for which psychosocial wellbeing is a better term).” “Further doubts must be raised about McGorry’s agenda when you see the substantial funding his organization (Orygen Youth Health) receives from the pharmaceutical industry...”⁷

OTHER CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AFFILIATED WITH THE CONFERENCE

- Professor Ian Hickie, director of the NSW Brain and Mind Research Institute has received funding from Bristol-Myers Squibb, Pfizer’s funding of GPs training in Prof. Hickie’s depression screening method called SPHERE, helped make their antidepressant, Zoloft, a best-seller in Australia. Has served on the professional advisory boards convened by the drug industry in relation to specific antidepressants made by Bristol-Myers Squibb and Eli Lilly. Has led projects funded in, part, by Bristol-Myers Squibb, Pfizer, Eli Lilly, Wyeth and Servier.⁸
- Cameron Carter has served as a consultant for Eli Lilly, Hoffman-La Roche, Merck, and Pfizer⁹ and received grants from GlaxoSmithKline.¹⁰
- Shitij Kapur has received grant support or has been a consultant/scientific advisor or had speaking engagements with AstraZeneca, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Eli Lilly, EMD—Darmstadt, Glaxo Smith Kline, Janssen (Johnson and Johnson), Neuromolecular Inc, Pfizer, Otsuka, Organon, Sanofi-Synthelabo, Servier, and Solvay Wyeth.¹¹
- Cynthia Shannon Weickert has received speaker fees from Astra Zeneca and Astellas and travel assistance from Eli Lilly.¹²
- Melissa Green has been a reviewer for Pfizer Australia Neuroscience Research Grants.¹³
- John McGrath has received support from Eli Lilly to attend conferences on schizophrenia.¹⁴
- Dr. Eoin Killackey has been a member of Janssen-Cilag Speakers Bureau.¹⁵
- Cherie Galletly (along with P Tylis and DT Lui) has received a grant from Eli Lilly and Janssen-Cilag for schizophrenia studies.¹⁶
- Stan Catts is a Trustee of the Queensland Schizophrenia Research Foundation that receives financial support from Janssen Cilag, Eli Lilly and Lundbeck.¹⁷

We want parents and youths to get the facts, to be informed of all available medical and educational solutions that do not rely upon heavy, mind-altering drugs.

GET THE FACTS

CCHR was established in 1969 by the Church of Scientology and Professor of Psychiatry Dr Thomas Szasz with the sole purpose of investigating and exposing psychiatric violations of human rights.

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