



American College of
Neuropsychopharmacology

Joint Statement on Federal Concerns About Psychotropic Medication Safety

March 21, 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.

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP)
American College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ACNP)
American Psychiatric Association (APA)
American Society for Clinical Psychopharmacology (ASCP)
National Network of Depression Centers (NNDC)
Society of Biological Psychiatry (SOBP)

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The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry promotes the healthy development of children, adolescents, and families through advocacy, education, and research. Child and adolescent psychiatrists are the leading physician authority on children's mental health. For more information, please visit www.aacap.org.

The American College of Neuropsychopharmacology, founded in 1961, is a professional organization of more than 1,100 leading scientists, including four Nobel Laureates. The mission of ACNP is to further research and education in neuropsychopharmacology and related fields in the following ways: promoting the interaction of a broad range of scientific disciplines of brain and behavior in order to advance the understanding of prevention and treatment of disease of the nervous system including psychiatric, neurological, behavioral, and addictive disorders; encouraging scientists to enter research careers in fields related to these disorders and their treatment; and ensuring the dissemination of relevant scientific advances. For more information, please visit www.acnp.org.

The American Psychiatric Association, founded in 1844, is the oldest medical association in the country. The APA is also the largest psychiatric association in the world with more than 39,200 physician members specializing in the diagnosis, treatment, prevention, and research of mental illnesses. APA's vision is to ensure access to quality psychiatric diagnosis and treatment. For more information, please visit www.psychiatry.org.

The American Society of Clinical Psychopharmacology (ASCP) was founded in 1992 to advance the science and practice of clinical psychopharmacology. It's over 900 members are physicians who study and practice psychopharmacology, as well as doctoral level investigators of clinical psychopharmacology or of pharmacology. ASCP members are advocates for clinical psychopharmacology and for clinical research. www.ascpp.org

The National Network of Depression Centers (NNDC) was established in 2008 to mobilize collaborative expertise to counteract the public health crisis of depression, bipolar illnesses, and other mood disorders. The NNDC is a nonprofit network of academic medical centers dedicated to improving the lives of those affected by depression and related mood disorders. We are working to change the national conversation surrounding these illnesses through large-scale collaborative studies, education and outreach. For more information, please visit www.nndc.org.

The Society of Biological Psychiatry promotes excellence in research investigating the nature, causes, mechanisms, and treatments of disorders of thought, emotion, and behavior. SOBP educates clinicians, early career scientists, and educators in psychiatry about the biological underpinnings of psychiatric disorders and disseminates the highest quality knowledge regarding the scientific basis of psychiatry in accessible manner to professionals, trainees, and lay audiences. For more information, please visit www.sobp.org.

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