Numerous Medications Are Linked to Depression and Suicidal Symptoms

This finding came from a larger report indicating that U.S. residents are increasingly taking drugs linked to such symptoms.

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U.S. residents are increasingly taking medications associated with depression, The New York Times reports. The roster of some 200 medications associated with depression or suicidal symptoms includes many antiretrovirals (ARVs) used to treat HIV and other drugs commonly taken by people living with the virus.

Publishing their findings in The Journal of the American Medical Association, researchers analyzed data from a nationally representative sample of 26,192 adults drawn from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. The researchers looked at five two-year cycles starting in 2005 to 2006 and ending in 2013 to 2014.

The average age of the cohort members was 46 years old. A total of 7.6 percent of them reported depression.

Medications associated with depression include proton-pump inhibitors (used for acid reflux), beta-blockers (used for high blood pressure), birth control pills, emergency contraceptives, anticonvulsants (anti-seizure medications that may be used to treat pain or mood stabilization), corticosteroids (such as prednisone), interferon (which until recently was used to treat hepatitis C virus) and high-dose ibuprofen.

ARVs associated with suicidal symptoms include Atripla (efavirenz/tenofovir disoproxil fumarate/emtricitabine) and Isentress (raltegravir). HIV medications associated with non-suicidal depressive symptoms include Epzicom (abacavir/lamivudine), Emtriva (emtricitabine) and Selzentry (maraviroc). Emtriva is included in all available single-tablet HIV regimens except for Triumeq (dolutegravir/abacavir/lamivudine) and Juluca (dolutegravir/rilpivirine).

A total of 37.2 percent of the cohort took medications associated with depression. This figure increased from 35 percent during the 2005 to 2006 cycle to 38.4 percent during the 2013 to 2014 cycle. From 2005 to 2006, an estimated 6.9 percent of the cohort used three or more medications linked to depression at once, a figure that increased to 9.5 percent during 2013 to 2014. These patterns persisted when the researchers restricted their analysis to just those treated with

antidepressants and those with high blood pressure and when they excluded those taking psychotropic medications.

Among those not on an antidepressant, 6.9 percent of those on any drugs linked to depression had the mental health condition and 15.3 percent of those on three such drugs had depression. Just 4.7 percent of those not taking any drug associated with depression had the condition.

After adjusting the data for various factors linked to depression, such as poverty or chronic pain, the researchers found that compared with taking no medications linked to depression, taking one such drug was associated with a 2.2-fold increased risk of depression, while taking two such drugs and taking three or more were associated with a respective 4.9-fold and 10.7-fold increased likelihood of depression. There was no such link based on the number of medications not associated with depression that people took.

To read a complete list of the medications mentioned in the report, click here.

To read the New York Times article, click here.

To read the study abstract, click here.

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