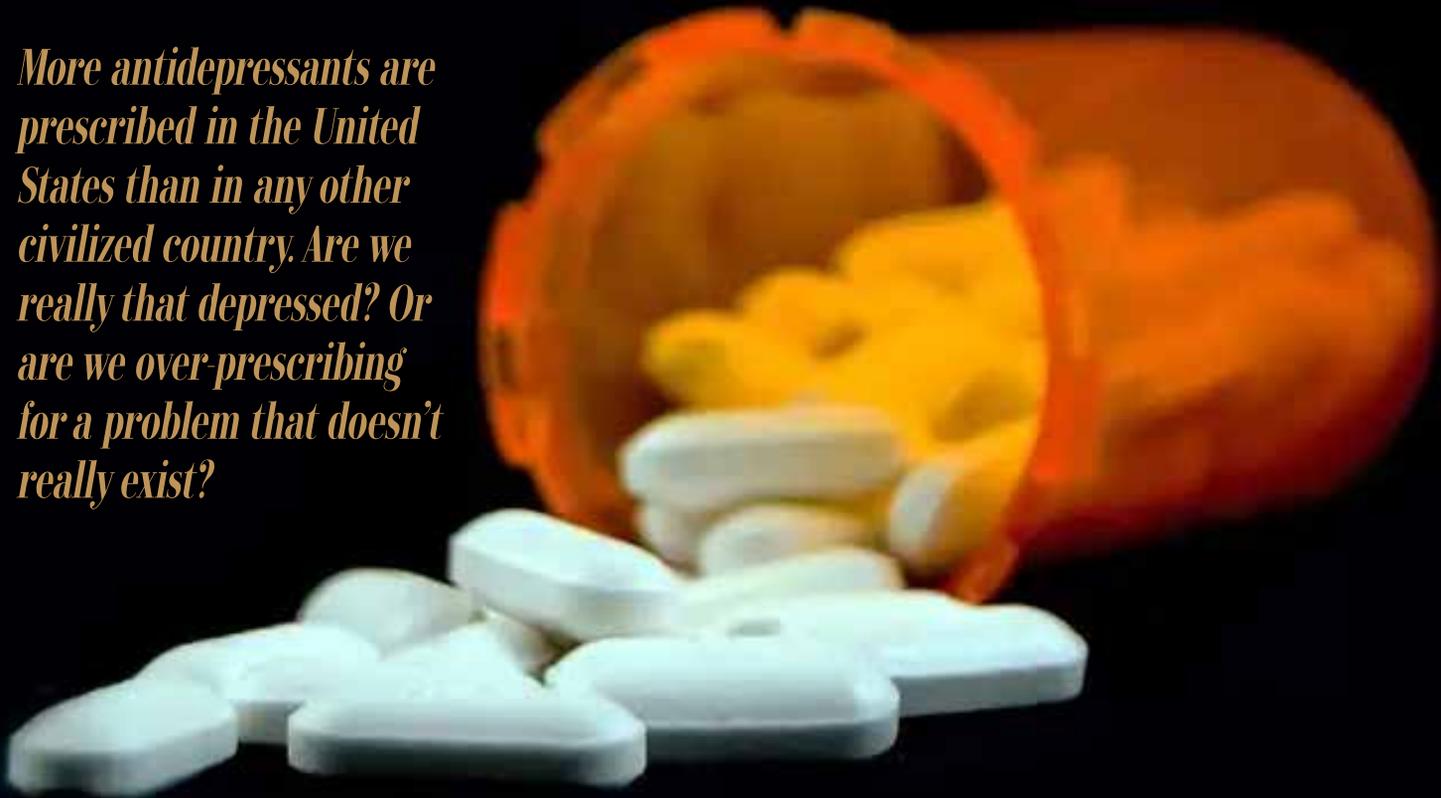


ANTIDEPRESSANTS

Mama, We're All Going Crazy Now

BY JACOBUS HOLLEWIJN

More antidepressants are prescribed in the United States than in any other civilized country. Are we really that depressed? Or are we over-prescribing for a problem that doesn't really exist?



Throughout the years, I've noticed a lot more people sharing with me that they're taking a daily prescription antidepressant. I often ask them what's going on in their life. Why do they need this drug? And, do they think it's really helping? The answer often reflects they would rather not take them, but there is also a fear that life may get worse if they don't.

Doctors have convinced patients that taking antidepressant

medications is a good and necessary thing if they want to function within relationships and within society. And, because most patients trust their doctor, they go along with it. It frustrates, even angers me to notice it doesn't take much for physicians to prescribe meds such as Zoloft, Paxil, Prozac, Cymbalta, or Lexapro. The list of options is long; the list of possible emotional upheavals even longer.

Depression is a big, umbrella-like word that covers different feelings:

anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), grief, loneliness, seasonal affective disorder (SAD), self-esteem issues, shyness, feeling down, bi-polar disorder, schizophrenia, sadness, and others. Very few people are actually born with these. Most have gone through (tough) experiences that have brought out these emotions. It's the way many of us cope with physical pain, trauma, break-ups, divorce, death, accidents, (past) bullying, abuse, loss, shame, learning

disabilities, and abandonment.

Modern medicine has convinced us that physicians are the experts when dealing with any health-related struggle, and we are funneled towards them. Medical schools encourage students to pick a specialty field after they finish their core classes. Options range from research and development on one hand, to establishing a private practice on the other. Many smart youngsters go into medical schools, and even smarter adults come out. But being smart is not the same as being wise. A specialist knows a lot about very little, and will try to find an answer in the detail he/she is presented with. A wise person wants to place the detail into the larger picture of life itself, and put life into the detailed problem.

For example, psychiatrists, experts in depression-related disorders, more often than not, ponder medications for mental and emotional conditions along with 'talk therapy.' They decide on what and how much should be taken by the patient. Yet, antidepressant medications don't much address your world. They numb what needs to be numbed so you can function in the world. And they do it with such detailed efficacy, it is almost impossible to live life without them anymore.

Who do these medical experts consider for an antidepressant prescription? Some are easy to identify, such as people in prisons, or patients in an asylum, but too many may surprise you. We all know someone on medication for their mental or emotional health, but we never knew they had an issue. And, ever since the explosion of social media platforms, more and more young adults, teenagers, and even preteens, now take anxiety medication or a low-

dose antidepressant. COVID-19 did not help with that, either.

These drugs are synthetically created formulas that will disturb the status quo in the natural brain for the sake of making it better. But by doing that, some other problem could pop up to let off steam—side-effects. In the case of antidepressants, these possible side-effects are pretty heavy: sudden thoughts of committing suicide, weight gain, lethargy, aggression towards others, lowered sex drive, impotence, fatigue, and indigestion. In the still-developing brain of a child/teenager, there is an even larger risk for long term side-effects. It's not just alcohol, marijuana, and other illegal drugs that can severely affect a child's developing brain; antidepressants, anti-anxiety medication, and ADHD medication can do that, as well.

Though medications come with inserts about possible side effects, these are not a reason to let a physician off the hook

for prescribing them, or to let a pharmaceutical company continue to experiment on people, without anyone taking responsibility. There are people in prisons and in asylums because they started taking long-term prescription drugs at a young age. Their freedoms are gone now. We can never fix a medical modality or a practitioner if neither will take responsibility for their actions.

I've been fortunate to work in the natural supplement industry for the last thirty years. My experience in talking with folks dealing with, and treated for depression and anxiety is that too many are being treated for symptoms, not for underlying causes. These include:

- Mis-diagnosing (by modern medicine doctors) of PMS-related disorders, starting with teenage girls all the way to women going through menopause. PMS is caused by a hormonal imbalance. Symptoms include anxiety, depression, mood swings, fatigue,



and headaches. Restore the balance, and most symptoms will disappear. Ditto in menopausal women: understand, they lost a bunch of hormones, reintroduce them and watch the rebirth.

■ It also includes under-diagnosing of thyroid disorders. Doctors do a quick blood test on the thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH) to see if there is a thyroid issue. Three things are a problem here: 1) TSH is not made by your thyroid; it's produced by the pituitary gland in the brain. TSH is supposed to stimulate the thyroid to make its hormones, T4 and T3. 2) Every blood test shows a reference range; you're too low, you're too high, or you are right in the range. TSH's reference range is too wide (0.55-4.78 uIU/mL) and should be narrowed to 0.30-2.0 uIU/mL). This leaves a lot of people under-diagnosed on their thyroid. Low thyroid symptoms, which are more prevalent than hyperthyroid issues, include anxiety, depression, apathy, low libido, headaches, migraines, low body temperature, sensitivity to cold and heat, hair loss, weight gain, and insomnia.

If you have these symptoms and you're being told there is nothing wrong with your thyroid, it



further affects your quality of life. Next thing you know, your doctor is suggesting some type of antidepressant. 3) There is also controversy around a healthy range for the actual thyroid hormones T4 and T3. These tests are usually suggested by the thyroid specialist, the endocrinologist. Not only have the ranges been updated, which is still not reflected in the blood tests; endocrinologists do not quickly test for thyroid antibodies, which could indicate an actual autoimmune disorder. These tests are called Thyroid Peroxidase (TPO-Ab) and Thyroglobulin (TG-Ab). Autoimmune disorders are to be treated differently. Their existence

may be related to a food allergy or to a past trauma (Adverse Childhood Experiences, ACEs.)

■ The over-diagnosing of cholesterol problems. Upper total cholesterol levels have been lowered since 1995 (from 300+ to 200), causing more and more people to start taking cholesterol lowering drugs (statins). Not only has this been proven to be the wrong approach to lower cardiovascular problems and heart attacks, heart disease is still the #1 cause of death in our country. Statins cause fatigue, body aches, insomnia, dizziness, digestive upsets, and sexual problems—very unpleasant side effects. I remember my mother being offered an antidepressant an hour after my father suddenly died of a heart attack. Hello!! She was in shock—sad and grieving, not depressed.

Natural medicine offers many options and alternatives to conventional therapies and medications. More and more people are trying dietary supplements, and use practitioners who do not follow mainstream medicine. Sadly, these supplements, natural practitioners, and their therapies





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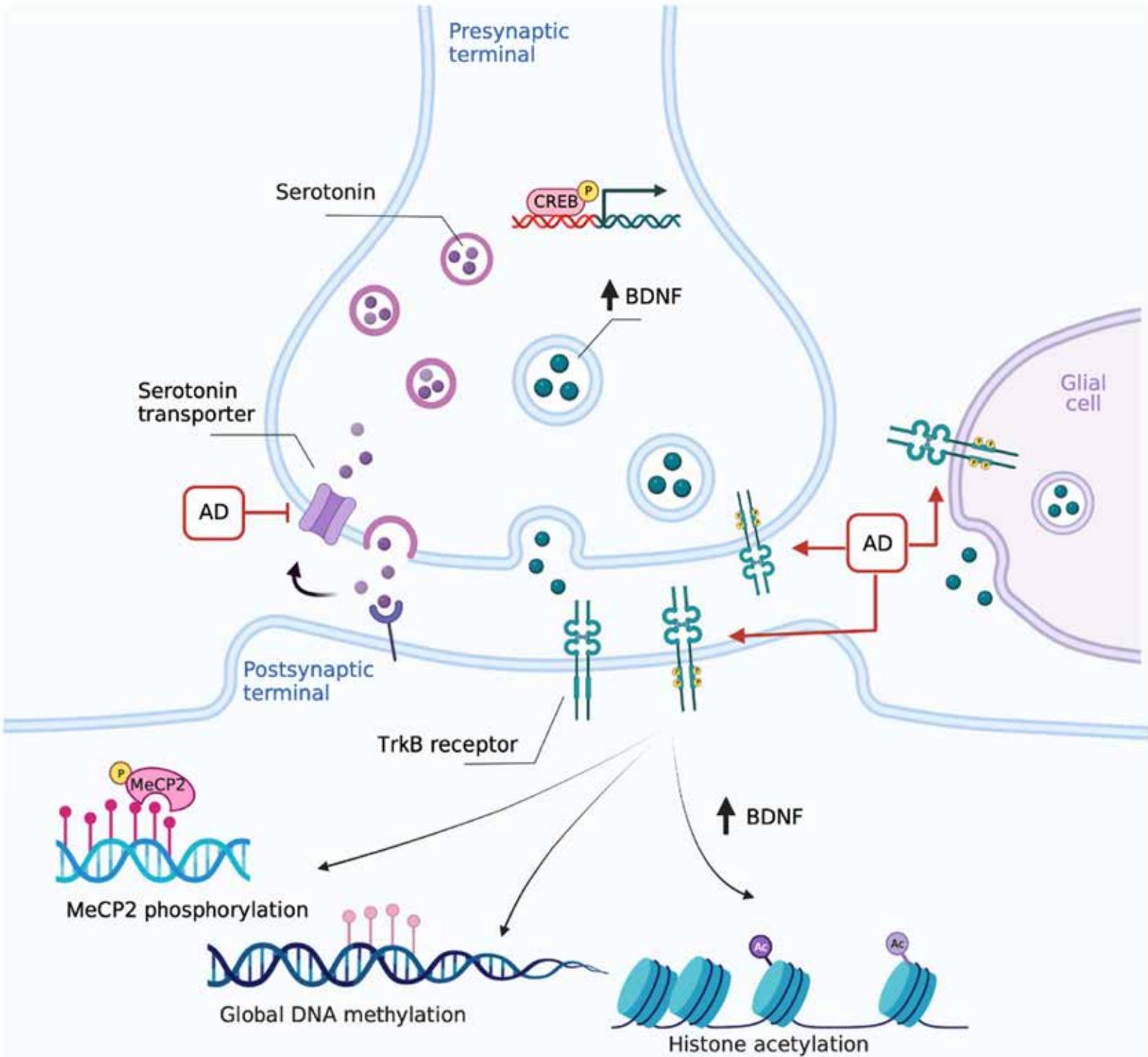
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ridiculed, and snickered at by most MDs. There is no reason for that, because allopathic medicine's own record of success is not that great when it comes to treating mental health issues. We can talk all day long about natural medicine's five thousand year history and its safety record through gentle trial

and error, but it doesn't matter. If people are programmed to see a medical doctor for every ailment and mental health crisis they experience, the door to natural medicine seems far away and out of reach. On top of that, insurance companies treat alternative therapies as "experimental," further alienating people on a tight budget.

However, if you are interested in natural remedies for depression and anxiety, look into and try for yourself well-researched and proven products such as St. John's Wort, GABA, Lemon Balm, Ashwagandha, Bach Flower Therapy, vitamin B-complex, and vitamin D3. With adequate amounts daily, your glass will soon be half-full again!



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