

The Truth  *About Health*

Pharmaceutical Companies: Improving Health or Creating New Illnesses?

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The industry that gave us the false promise of relief from depression, anxiety and mood swings through the modification of serotonin levels in the body may have also just caused a whole new package of problems. The Food and Drug Administration has just released a set of warnings that identify a new problem caused by the drug industry. It's named the Serotonin Syndrome.

Serotonin Syndrome occurs when the body produces too much serotonin, a naturally occurring substance in body. Antidepressant drugs like Prozac and Paxil are known as SSRIs (Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors). They affect moods by keeping serotonin active when it would normally be removed from the system after performing its normal functions in the nervous system.

According to the FDA warning, dangerously high serotonin levels may occur when a patient on a SSRI such as Paxil or Prozac takes this prescription in conjunction with other medications known as triptans.

Triptans are usually used to bring relief to migraine headache sufferers. They include Relpax, Axert and Frova. These drugs, introduced in the 1990s, bring temporary migraine relief through the dilation of cranial blood vessels.

The artificially high levels of serotonin resulting from this combination of drugs can create a whole new set of symptoms referred to as Serotonin Syndrome. Some symptoms are even life-threatening, according to the FDA warning. Serotonin Syndrome may include restlessness, hallucinations, loss of coordination, fast heartbeat, rapid changes in blood pressure, increased body temperature, overactive reflexes, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

The FDA is warning patients and doctors alike to be aware of the problems that can occur when these types of medications are intentionally or unknowingly combined. This problem may arise when two different doctors are involved in writing prescriptions for the patient, for instance.

SOURCE: http://www.fda.gov/CDER/drug/advisory/SSRI_SS200607.htm