

CORRESPONDENCE

Content

*Efficacy of Anti-Depressants
& Dawn's editorial

EFFICACY OF ANTI-DEPRESSANTS & DAWN'S EDITORIAL

Dear Editor,

This letter is in reference with the recent 'provocative' editorial in Dawn on March 2, 2008¹, quoting a research by Kirsch et al², with an added commentary, stating, "Once hooked on antidepressants, patients canturn suicidal if they try to wean themselves off the drug".

Kirsch et al research, questioning efficacy of anti depressants in moderate depression, has been a hot topic in scientific circle over last three months.

The generalizability of this research is questionable for number of scientific reasons the details of which can not be discussed here due to limited space³. The authors statement by saying that anti depressants are ineffective seems quite absolute and against the scientific traditions.

It may not be applicable to our settings. For example the presentation and objective measurement of depression severity in Pakistan could be different from the west, due to its distinct culture norms and social mores.

The interpretation of this research seems biased. Number of studies have findings which are not in agreement with this review. For example, a study using Food and Drug Administration (FDA) data, Erick Turner and Robert Rosenthal concluded that individual antidepressant is better than placebo⁴.

Publishing, such misinterpreted information on the pretext of being mirror of public opinion is very unfortunate. This could increase the suffering of depressed

patients, making them further non compliant which is already a staggering problem.

Editorials like these can only add to the misconceptions already prevalent in the public, as antidepressants are wrongly perceived as ineffective and addictive.

Media is capable of distorting public opinion and has been found to be overwhelmingly negative toward Psychiatry⁵. It is essential that the psychiatrists and psychologists should establish a liaison with media to ward off such unfortunate and some times biased publications. Unfortunately, highly influential mental health professionals in Pakistan have not been able to exert the influence on print and electronic media for proper education of the masses.

REFERENCES

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