

# It's the Drugs, Stupid! Prescription Psychotropic Drugs Cause Brain Injury

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## An essay by Charles Gant, MD, PhD and Greg Lewis, PhD

Psychotropic drugs have been used for the purpose of suppressing fear and enabling murderous rage for a long time. In *Dispatches*, his extraordinary book about the war in Vietnam, Michael Herr passes this along about the use of drugs by American soldiers:

“Going out at night the medics gave you pills. . . . I knew one 4th Division Lurp [Long-Range Reconnaissance Patrol] who took his pills by the fistful, downs from the left pocket of his tiger suit and ups from the right, one to cut the trail, the other to send him down it. He told me that they cooled things out just right for him, that he could see that old jungle at night like he was looking at it through a starlight scope.”

Today, many of our children are prescribed the same psychotropic drugs as were given to our soldiers, in the children's case for the treatment of such conditions as ADHD and for psychiatric disorders. In fact, the practice of psychiatry has become in many cases nothing more than a license to distribute powerfully addictive, brain-damaging drugs to our children.

And where illegal drugs such as cocaine and “speed” are often cited for their negative effects, in fact, among the drugs that are often prescribed for ADHD, Ritalin is chemically similar to cocaine and Adderall is a mix of four powerful amphetamines. We're addicting more than ten percent of our children — overwhelmingly boys — to these drugs because they have difficulty sitting still and paying attention in class.

And those who aren't prescribed the drugs can purchase them without prescriptions through online drug outlets or from friends. In fact, among many children, using psychotropic drugs has become de rigeur. When their friends are prescribed these drugs, peer pressure dictates that they themselves also be able to take the drugs, and the black market for such substances among young people is very large.

One thing must be made very clear: psychotropic drugs of any kind, whether or not they're stimulants, damage our brains, especially our frontal lobes. The frontal lobes are the area of the brain that enables us to make rational decisions, to avoid taking unnecessary risks, and to experience empathy for others. Recently, the term “frontal lobe syndrome” has been brought into use to describe the effects of prolonged drug use that damages this portion of the brain and increases our propensity to act violently and with depraved indifference.

Among the consequences of physicians' irresponsible prescribing practices is this: in every

single gun massacre over the past several decades for which we have reliable information about drug use, the shooter has been taking psychotropic drugs prescribed by a physician. It may be the case that if those shooters who have committed such recent atrocities as that in Newtown had not had access to psychotropic drugs, the shootings would not have occurred. That they are occurring more frequently and are escalating in brutality — if that is possible — is due to the fact, not that we are legal gun owners, but that we are legal drug users.

As far as we are aware, every study of the effects of the long-term use of psychotropic drugs, whether illicit, “recreational” — e.g., alcohol — or prescribed, indicates that such use causes brain injury, especially to the frontal lobes, by far the least rugged area of our brains. Over time, the consequent frontal lobe syndrome renders a person increasingly incapable of inhibiting impulsive and violent behaviors while at the same time generally sparing the intellect so that such drug users can systematically plan their assaults but are unable to refrain from carrying them out.

Young people are far more vulnerable than adults to the negative side effects of all drugs, and criminal activity by young people under the influence of drugs becomes an iatrogenic outcome in an anything-goes society that does its part by placing few restraints on its younger members’ behavior and compounds that by looking the other way as they damage their brains with prescription chemicals that magnify the youngsters’ capability to exhibit violent behavior.

How can we talk about protecting our kids from gun violence if we don’t at the same time protect their brains from iatrogenic drug violence, the real cause of such behavior? In fact, children who refrain from the use of drugs and alcohol — and this includes prescription psychotropic drugs as well as illegal drugs — are much less likely to commit violent crimes as adults than children who have used such substances.

The area in which we need much more restrictive laws is not gun control; rather, we need tighter and more restrictive controls against allowing psychotropic chemicals to get into the brains of children 21 years of age and younger, during which time their brains are developing and very vulnerable. The war against drugs needs to begin with eliminating prescription psychotropic drug availability to and use by our children.

Gun control laws, or the lack thereof, had nothing to do with the Newtown massacre. Adam Lanza was denied a permit to purchase a gun, but that didn’t prevent him from committing a gun crime. In the meantime, and for a long time to come, there are going to be great quantities of “legal” psychotropic drugs out there, not least because “psych meds” are still going to be prescribed to children as if they were candy.

Until we have the will to demand an end to prescribing psychotropic substances for our children, we must call for the hiring of armed security guards at schools, as we already do in many inner-city locations, and for the upgrading of schools with bullet-proof access portals. These are things we must do based on the truth that it’s the drugs, and not the guns, that are the real danger.

End Your Addiction Now presents Dr Gant’s groundbreaking program for reducing substance abuse and eliminating addiction naturally.

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