

Effects of Psychotropic Drugs to School-Age Children

Several school-age children today are suffering from different mental and behavioral disorders. These disorders include Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), autism, depression, and many other psychosocial problems. Because of these disorders, the child experiences many problems such as being friendless, learning disability, commit crimes and even commit suicide.

Surgeon General David Satcher stated in a news report that one out of ten children is suffering from serious mental disorders that can damage his development and less than one out of five children acquire medication. Most parents of these children rely on just psychotherapy and talk alone to treat the child's illness until psychotropic drugs were discovered. (Littel, 2006).

Psychotropic drugs are drugs that contain psychotropic substances that can directly affect the nervous system. It is now commonly used by children with mental and behavioral illnesses. These drugs can be classified as stimulants, non-stimulants, anti-depressants, mood stabilizers and other drugs that are used to manage ADHD, bulimia nervosa, and other eating disorders. Psychotropic drugs are found to be very beneficial but it also has its side effects – effects that are really harmful to children using it.

Psychotropic drugs are originally designed and tested for adult use that is why most of them are not approved by the Food and Drug Association for children consumption (Psychotropic Drugs and Children, 2004).

Stimulants

Stimulants are used for children with ADHD and other attention problems. It is said to be effective in short-treatment of the disorder and is also said to be effective if the drug is taken continually. However, stimulants also have its side effects. Bad effects can also occur due to improper dosage, missed dosage, improper medication and other mistakes in taking the drug. A child may experience headache, insomnia, loss of appetite, weight loss, skin rashes, and stomach aches. There are also some rare cases that the child's blood pressure might increase and nausea and dizziness might be experienced. Over dosage to a stimulant drug may result to vomiting, hallucinations, delirium, sweating, and muscle twitching (Psychotropic Drugs and Children, 2004).

Non-stimulant

Non-stimulants are also used by children with ADHD and attention problems. An example of this drug is Straterra. Misuse of this drug might result to vomiting, nausea, stomach pains, mood swings, irritability, and insomnia. The child may also lose weight and eventually gain weight (Psychotropic Drugs and Children, 2004).

Antidepressants

This group of psychotropic drugs are one of the most prescribed for children. These drugs are designed to fight depressions, mood disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder. The traditional antidepressants are called the tricyclic depressants but it was found out that these drugs have dangerous side effects. But a newer kind of drug called the selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI) are said to be safer and are mostly prescribed by psychiatrists to children. Examples of this drug are Prozac, Zoloft, Paxil,

Luvox, and Celexa. These drugs are said to control the mood of school aged children (Littel, 2006)..

Although these drugs are mostly prescribed by experts, it also has is bad effects in children. It can cause anxiety, insomnia, and loss of appetite. Misuse of this drug might also cause the child to think of committing suicide, attempting it, and in some cases, commit it. The table below shows the Antidepressant prescriptions among school-age children and youth:

	Percent of children & youth prescribed antidepressants		
	1998	2000	2002
Preschool (<5 years)			
Girls	.08	.12	.16
Boys	.14	.14	.23
Elementary (6-10 years)			
Girls	.57	.72	.84
Boys	1.21	1.18	1.60
Middle school (11-14 years)			
Girls	1.44	1.63	2.36
Boys	2.56	2.64	3.12
High school (15-18 years)			
Girls	3.74	4.73	6.36
Boys	3.00	3.49	4.23

Mood stabilizers

Mood stabilizers are used for children with bipolar disorders. Intake of this drug might result to vomiting, abdominal pain, headache, nausea, drowsiness, and dizziness. There are also rare cases that intake of mood stabilizers may result to pancreatitis and liver disease. Examples of mood stabilizers are Depakote and Litobid (Psychotropic Drugs and Children, 2004).

Drugs used to treat eating disorders

Eating disorders are also very common to children especially to teens. Examples of eating disorders are Bulimia nervosa and Anorexia nervosa. Prozac and other SSRIs are the common drugs used to treat these disorders. Impairment in judgment, thinking, and locomotive skills are some of the effects in taking this kind of drug. Insomnia, agitation, and loss of appetite are also observed with the intake of this drug. There are some rare cases that the person taking this kind of drug might think of committing suicide, attempting to do it, and commit it eventually (Psychotropic Drugs and Children, 2004).

These are just some of the effects in letting our children intake psychotropic drugs. Some dangerous costs might include alienation from family and friends which is very bad for a child. Children that intake these drugs have the highest tendency to have flunked grades in school and might even commit crimes.

We can prevent these bad effects to happen to our child if only we communicate very well to the doctors and experts and also by following instructions very well.

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