

Statement on The Connection Between Psychotropic Drugs and Mass Murder  
January 2, 2013

The Board of Directors and membership of the International Society For Ethical Psychology and Psychiatry send condolences to the people of Newtown, Connecticut on their horrific losses. Our hearts go out to the parents of the children who were killed and to the families and friends of the adults who were killed.

We are calling for an inquiry into the connection between these acts of mass murder and the use of psychotropic drugs. Although the media have cited family members and acquaintances saying Adam Lanza was taking prescription drugs to treat “a neurological-development disorder”, we do not know if he was on psychotropic drugs. But we do know that James Holmes, the Colorado “Batman” shooter, had taken 100 milligrams of Vicodin immediately before he shot up the movie theatre<sup>1</sup>. And we do know that:

Christopher Pittman was on antidepressants when he killed his grandparents<sup>2</sup>;

Eric Harris, one of the gunmen in the Columbine school shooting, was taking Luvox and Dylan Klebold, his partner, had taken Zoloft and Paxil<sup>3</sup>;

Doug Williams, who killed five and wounded nine of his fellow Lockheed Martin employees, was on Zoloft and Celexa<sup>4</sup>;

Michael McDermott was on three antidepressants when he fired off 37 rounds and killed seven of his fellow employees in the Massachusetts Wakefield massacre<sup>5</sup>;

Kip Kinkel was on Prozac when he killed his parents and then killed 2 children and wounded 25 at a nearby school<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Allen, N., Colorado shooting: James Holmes appears in court. *The Telegraph* (London, U.K.). July 23, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Meier, B., A drug on trial: Justice and science; Boy's murder case entangled in fight over antidepressants. *New York Times*. August 23, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Achenbach, J. & Russakoff, D., Teen shooter's life paints antisocial portrait. *Washington Post*. April 29, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Carmichael, F., Anatomy of a nightmare: Tracing events of a tragic Tuesday. *The Meridian (FL) Star*. July 13, 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Johnson, K., In wake of killings: Strands of suspect's life. *New York Times*. December 28, 2000.

In fourteen recent school shoots, the acts were committed by persons taking or withdrawing from psychiatric drugs, resulting in over 100 wounded and 58 killed. In other school shootings, information about the shooter's prescription drug use and other medical history were kept from public records.<sup>7</sup>

This connection between psychotropic drugs and mass murder is not coincidental. There is enough evidence that antidepressants cause increased risk of suicide and violence for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and its Canadian counterpart to require that drug companies include a "black box" warning to that effect on their packages. Our first knowledge of this association between psychotropic drugs and violence came from studies completed in the early 1950s<sup>8</sup>. This was supported by research completed on antidepressants in the mid-1970s<sup>9</sup>. More recent studies have corroborated this association between antidepressants and homicide/suicide.<sup>10,11</sup> Antidepressants, specifically Paxil, appear to more than double the risk of hostility events in adult and pediatric placebo-controlled trials.<sup>12</sup>

All of the classes of psychiatric drugs can cause violent, irrational, and/or manic behavior. Among other effects, these drugs cause a neurological condition called "akathisia," which means that persons who take them can't sit still and feel like they are jumping out of their skin. They behave in an agitated manner which they cannot control and experience unbearable rage, delusions, and disassociation. For a detailed explanation of the neurology, chemistry, and physiology of akathisia, see *Rethinking Psychiatric Drugs: A Guide to Informed Consent* by Dr. Grace Jackson.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Begley, S., When teens fall apart. *Newsweek*. May 9, 1999.

<sup>7</sup> [www.cchrint.org/school-shooters/](http://www.cchrint.org/school-shooters/). Accessed December 27, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Jackson, G.R., (2005). *Rethinking psychiatric drugs: A guide to informed consent*. Bloomington, IN: Author House.

<sup>9</sup> Avery, D. & Winokur, G. (1976). Morbidity in depressed patients treated with electroconvulsive therapy and antidepressants. *Archives of General Psychiatry*. September, 1976.

<sup>10</sup> Antonuccio, D.O. & Healy, D (2012). Relabeling the medications we call antidepressants. *Scientifica*. Vol. 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Clarke, C. & Evans, J. (2012). Neuroleptic drugs and violence. Posted on [www.madinamerica.com](http://www.madinamerica.com) on August 19, 2012. [www.madinamerica.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Neuroleptic-Drugs-and-Violence](http://www.madinamerica.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Neuroleptic-Drugs-and-Violence).

<sup>12</sup> Healy, D., Herxheimer, A. & Menkes, D.B. (2006). Antidepressants and violence: Problems at the interface of medicine and law. *PLoS Medicine* 3(9), e372.

Psychotropic drugs – antidepressants, antipsychotics, mood stabilizers – impair the ability of people to accurately and effectively process emotions. They take away caring. They dull conscience. In his book *Listening to Prozac*, psychiatrist Peter Kramer reported that his patients on Prozac didn't care as much. They lost some of their conscience. This made it easier for them to do things that were hurtful to other people.<sup>13</sup>

In his book *Medication Madness*, psychiatrist Peter Breggin presents evidence of how psychotropic drugs cause people to lose awareness of how they are behaving and to lose control over their behavior. Such people are at greatly increased risk of committing acts of crime and violence.<sup>14</sup>

Psychotropic drugs are toxic to the children and adults who take them. Psychiatrist Grace Jackson writes that “with the possible exception of the chemotherapies used in the treatment of cancer, it would be difficult to identify a class of medications as toxic as antipsychotics.”<sup>15</sup> The psychiatric drugs that we give to our children and adults in the United States have significant “side effects” including apathy, abnormal dreams, acute respiratory distress, akathisia, agitation, aggression, agoraphobia, paranoia, assorted blood pressure and heart problems, breast enlargement in young boys, measurable brain damage, cerebral atrophy, disinhibition, hostility, homicidal and suicidal ideation, convulsions, diabetes, Parkinson's symptoms, tardive dyskinesia, tremors, convulsions, psychosis, cerebral vascular accident, inability to express emotion, lethargy, increased chronicity of emotional problems, early dementia and early death.<sup>8,9,10,14</sup>

We understand that many factors are involved in acts of mass murder. We are not suggesting that psychotropic drugs are the only or the major factor. But we do know there have been 22 international drug regulatory warnings about the impact of psychotropic drugs on suicidal and homicidal ideation, mania, violence and hostility.<sup>16</sup> We do believe that there is enough evidence of the association between psychotropic drugs and mass murder to warrant an inquiry. And we believe that psychological autopsy and complete review of all medical records should be standard operating procedure in the investigations of these tragedies.

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<sup>13</sup> Kramer, P. (1997). *Listening to Prozac*. New York: Penguin.

<sup>14</sup> Breggin, P. (2009). *Medication madness: The role of psychiatric drugs in cases of violence, suicide and crime*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.

<sup>15</sup> Jackson, G.R. (2009). *Drug-induced dementia: A perfect crime*. Bloomington, IN: Author House.

<sup>16</sup> [www.cohrint.org/psychiatric-drugs/drug-warnings-on-violence/](http://www.cohrint.org/psychiatric-drugs/drug-warnings-on-violence/) Accessed on December 27, 2012.

In spite of the evidence of this connection between psychotropic drugs and mass murder, the mainstream media has failed to write about it or investigate it. Psychiatrist David Healy says: "Violence and other potentially criminal behavior caused by prescription drugs are medicine's best kept secret. Never before in the fields of medicine and law have there been so many events with so much concealed data and so little focused expertise".<sup>17</sup> Neither has there been an investigation by our Federal government into this connection. It is time to open the data and focus our expertise on this issue.

In closing, we again express our sadness at the murder of children and adults at Sandy Hook Elementary School and extend our best wishes during this period of grief.

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<sup>17</sup> [www.prweb.com/releases/2012/11/prweb10120425](http://www.prweb.com/releases/2012/11/prweb10120425) Accessed on December 27, 2012.