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The interpersonal adverse effects reported by 1,008 users of antidepressants; and the incremental impact of polypharmacy

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Abstract

Antidepressant drugs are being prescribed at ever increasing rates internationally, despite marginal benefit compared to placebo and a range of adverse effects. Most studies of adverse effects focus on biological phenomena. This article presents the results of an online survey of 1,008 self-selected anti-depressant users in Britain, which asked about five adverse effects in the interpersonal domain. The most commonly reported among participants who took only antidepressants were: Sex Life – 43.7%, Work or Study – 27.0% and Social Life – 23.5%. These rates of interpersonal adverse effects were even higher for the 52% of participants who were also taking one or more other psychiatric drugs. Only about a half (48%) felt they had been given enough information about side effects by the prescriber. Those initially prescribed medication by a psychiatrist were more likely to be on several types of drugs and reported more adverse effects than those whose prescriber was a General Practitioner (GP). Researchers and prescribers are encouraged to pay greater attention to interpersonal adverse effects.

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