**Increased Use of ADHD Drugs May Actually Reduce the Risk of Suicide in Adolescents**

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MONTREAL -- February 1, 2016 -- Black-box warnings about the dangers of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) medications are confusing and could have serious consequences for the risk of suicide in adolescents, according to a review published in The Lancet Psychiatry.

“Health Canada has issued a series of black-box warnings about the suicidal potential of ADHD medications,” said Alain Lesage, Institut Universitaire en Santé Mentale de Montréal, Montreal, Quebec. “However, these warnings have failed to take into account epidemiological studies showing the opposite, that increased use of this medication has been associated with reduced suicide risk in adolescents.”

In the past decade, the medical treatment of ADHD increased 3-fold in Quebec, reaching 9% of boys aged 10 years and 4% of boys aged 15 years. However, suicide rates in Quebec’s adolescents decreased by nearly 50% during that period among adolescents aged 15 to 19 years, which contradicts the warnings issued by Health Canada.

“Clearly, the increased use of ADHD drugs indicates that they might actually reduce rather than augment the risk of suicide,” said Edouard Kouassi, Institut Universitaire en Santé Mentale de Montréal.

“Randomised controlled trials have shown ADHD medication to alleviate the usual symptoms of hyperactivity and attention deficit,” the authors wrote. “It has also been associated with improvements in school performance, better self-esteem, and reductions in conduct disorders, drug abuse, and pregnancies in girls. In fact, these disorders or precarious social situations are especially associated with increased risk of suicide, not the actual taking of these drugs, which, on the contrary, may prevent suicide.”

Indeed, Health Canada's black-box warming may contribute to reducing prescriptions because of parents’ fears about their children’s health, while these medications may actually protect them.

“The silence from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is especially worrying in a context in which it has been called on to prepare a national suicide prevention strategy for the government of Canada under Bill C-300,” the authors concluded. “We wrote this correspondence hoping to sound the alarm about the warnings published by Quebec's health authorities, as elsewhere in Canada, which might lead to a decrease in this effective medical treatment.:

SOURCE: University of Montreal

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