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Anti-Smoking Drug Banned for Airline Pilots After Link to Auto Accidents

by David Gutierrez

(NaturalNews) The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has banned the use of the popular anti-smoking drug Chantix by pilots and air traffic controllers, due to a study's conclusions that it could cause seizures and loss of consciousness that may have contributed to car accidents.

The study, conducted by researchers from the Institute for Safe Medication Practices, reviewed "adverse event reports" submitted to the FDA.

"We have immediate safety concerns about the use of [Chantix] among persons operating aircraft, trains, buses and other vehicles, or in other settings where a lapse in alertness or motor control could lead to massive, serious injury," the researchers wrote.

Among the [side effects](#) documented were psychiatric symptoms ranging from agitation and depression to suicidal behavior, erratic mood shifts and vivid nighttime visions that have been referred to as "Chantix dreams."

Chantix was approved by [the FDA](#) in May 2006 and the FAA in summer 2007. It is designed to help people quit smoking by simulating the effects of [nicotine](#) in the brain, but then blocking the effects of real nicotine should a patient begin smoking again while taking the drug. It typically costs \$130 per month, and treatment may last up to six months. More than 3.5 million people have used the drug in the [United States](#) alone.

After the FAA approved the drug, however, the FDA began receiving reports of psychiatric side effects. The agency revised the label of the drug to warn patients that they should stop taking the drug and contact a doctor immediately if they experience agitation, behavioral changes, depression or suicidal thoughts.

But according to Thomas J. Moore, lead researcher of the current study, the FDA has not gone far enough, because it has not issued a warning about "the nonpsychiatric elements."

These reported side effects include confusion, dizziness, muscle spasms and loss of [consciousness](#). According to the study, Chantix has led to 173 accidents including 77 falls and 28 traffic accidents. At the end of 2007, Chantix was the drug with the most reported side effects in the United States.

Sources for this story include: www.latimes.com.