Combining antidepressant drugs with migraine medicines endangers patients, admits FDA

(NewsTarget) The FDA has asked manufacturers of certain types of antidepressants and migraine treatment medications to update the prescribing information to warn patients of a possible life-threatening interaction between the two types of drugs.

Patients taking selective serotonin/norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs/SNRIs) to treat depression should be cautious when simultaneously taking migraine headache drugs known as triptans, as they could develop a life-threatening condition called serotonin syndrome.

Serotonin syndrome -- which occurs when the body has too much of the nervous system chemical serotonin -- can include symptoms such as hallucinations, restlessness, loss of coordination, rapid heart beat, increased body temperature, rapid changes in blood pressure, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea and overactive reflexes, according to the FDA. There is no lab test to diagnose serotonin syndrome; it is only recognized from its symptoms.

Common SSRIs include Zoloft, Prozac, Paxil and Lexapro; common SNRIs are Cymbalta and Effexor. Commonly prescribed triptans include Axert, Amerge, Imitrex and Zomig. The FDA warns that patients taking triptans with either SSRIs or SNRIs should consult a doctor prior to stopping their medication.

Natural options for treating migraines include eating fish, rye and celery, as well as supplementing with the herbs guarana and skullcap. Depression can often be relieved by eating oats, cabbage and brown rice, and by taking the herbs St. John's wort and lemon balm. However, patients on antidepressants and/or migraine medications should consult with a qualified medical practitioner before stopping or altering their medications. Various natural treatments for depression are listed a HerbReference.com.

Consumer health advocate Mike Adams, a frequent critic of antidepressant medications, saw the news as, "...yet further evidence that these synthetic chemicals do not belong in the human body. They do not prevent any disease or make any person healthier in the long run. But they do present significant health risks that can lead to severe injury or even death."