

Prescription Drug Addiction Gets Tax-Payer Boost In Australia — by ROD MACTAGGART

Australian citizens are up in arms about hundreds of thousands of prescriptions for SSRI-type anti-depressants such as Zoloft and Prozac being written for children despite warnings that they're unsafe for anyone under 24, and all paid for with tax dollars. And although anti-depressants are officially considered non-addictive, they can produce withdrawal symptoms that act like an addiction, and they send a “drugs are good for you” message to kids that has led to an epidemic of [prescription drug addiction](#) among young people.

In 2006, Australia's Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) subsidized 279,460 anti-depressant prescriptions, provided by Australian physicians who chose to ignore the advice of the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), the Aussie versions of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The TGA clearly recommends against their use in the treatment of depression in children, adolescents or young adults aged 18 to 24, because of a proven elevated risk of suicidal thinking and self-harm.

The numbers of young Australians taking SSRIs is unknown, but is probably much higher than those counted through the tax-supported rebate scheme, which does not include thousands of privately-paid prescriptions.

Children, teens and young adults forced to take anti-depressants by parents and doctors can be at greater risk of experimenting with other drugs, and some statistics indicate that many wind up with a prescription drug addiction involving opioid pain killers and other psychoactive medications. And SSRIs themselves readily appear addictive in spite of their 'official' classification as non-addictive. Trying to stop taking SSRIs can produce a veritable laundry list of symptoms that look, feel and sound like many other prescription drug addiction withdrawals. And the withdrawal symptoms are frequently handled by taking more SSRIs, or going to the doctor who just prescribes a different SSRI. Having to take more of a prescription to feel better again is a prescription drug addiction in almost anyone's books.

Despite the warnings about SSRIs for young people, in Australia the drugs have cost millions of dollars in taxpayer-funded rebates since the 1990s. And here in the U.S., the story is exactly the same. Insurance companies, and state and federal agencies that subsidize prescription drugs, have been on the warpath against widespread non-approved uses of SSRIs.

And across most of the countries in the free world, millions of children, teens and young adults are popping unapproved pills, pushed on them by doctors too busy to pay attention to soaring rates of prescription drug addiction. For thousands of addicted kids in Australia, and millions more around the world, [medical drug detox](#) may be in their future if they are lucky enough to start on the road to a drug-free life.