



Strategies for Quelling Medication Fears to Win the Battle with Depression

Fear of Medications Is Real

- For many battling depression, the fear of medications can seem insurmountable
- Who wants to tolerate uncertain side effects just to feel “normal” again?
- Yet millions have found relief through strategic use of antidepressants

Development of First Modern Antidepressants in 1950s

- Discovery of changes in neurotransmitter levels of serotonin, norepinephrine and dopamine might play a role in depression's underlying mechanisms

- Development of first modern antidepressants began with tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs) such as imipramine

- Additional antidepressant class introduced - monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs) such as iproniazid and phenelzine

Development of Antidepressants in Late 1980s

- Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), such as fluoxetine, emerged on the market and became widely used due to improved tolerability over prior medications

Breakthrough of Antidepressant Discovery in 2000s

- Breakthrough discovery of ketamine rapidly reduced depression symptoms by targeting glutamate pathways
- This discovery fueled new drug development focusing on ketamine's mechanism of rapid antidepressant action, in hopes of addressing issues with incomplete relief from prior medications

Types of Antidepressants

- SSRIs
- Serotonin and Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors (SNRIs)
- Tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs)
- Monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs)
- Noradrenaline and specific serotonergic antidepressants (NASSAs)
- Atypical antidepressants (e.g., trazodone and bupropion)
- Other antidepressants (e.g., bupropion and mirtazapine)

Effectiveness of Antidepressants

- Antidepressants are often first-line of treatment due to easier access/affordability
- Effectiveness varies between individuals due to genetic effects on metabolism
- Finding the right antidepressant involves trial-and-error of dosage adjustments or medication switches
- Takes 4-6 weeks to see full effect
- Less effective for mild/moderate depression

Common Side Effects Across All Antidepressant Types

- Nausea, diarrhea, and stomach upset for SSRIs, SNRIs, TCAs, and MAOIs
- Headaches (including tension headaches and migraines) for all antidepressant types
- Dry mouth for SSRIs, SNRIs, TCAs, MAOIs, and atypical antidepressants
- Dizziness for SSRIs, SNRIs, and atypical antidepressants
- Sleep disturbances for SSRIs, SNRIs, TCAs, MAOIs, NASSAs, and atypical antidepressants
- Sexual dysfunction for SSRIs, SNRIs, and TCAs
- Constipation for SNRIs, TCAs, and atypical antidepressants
- Change in appetite that leads to weight gain or loss for SSRIs, SNRIs, TCAs, and atypical antidepressants

Side Effects Specific to Certain Antidepressant Types

- SNRIs may cause tiredness in some people
- TCAs may cause blurred vision, urinary problems, and excessive sweating in addition to the common side effects
- MAOIs have distinctive side effects, including involuntary muscle jerks, muscle cramps, tingling sensations in the skin, and low blood pressure

Prevalence of Antidepressant Side Effects

- A study found that 38% of individuals taking SSRIs for depression experienced side effects included low sex drive, drowsiness, and weight gain
- Around 25% found the side effects to be significantly problematic
- Only 40% reported the negative side effects to their healthcare providers
- Another study found that antidepressant side effects peaked at 2 weeks but gradually improving by 6 weeks

Management of Side Effects: Communication & Collaboration

- Stay informed about potential side effects and educate yourself on the specific medication you are taking
- Communicate openly with your healthcare provider about any side effects you experience
- Discuss your medical history and current medications with your doctor
- Attend regular follow-up appointments to monitor your progress

Management of Side Effects: Medication Management

- Understand the importance of medication adherence for optimal treatment outcomes
- Ask your pharmacist or healthcare provider about alternative medications or dosage adjustments that may minimize side effects

Management of Side Effects: Adjustment & Patience

- Be patient and give your body time to adjust to the medications
- Understand that it may take time to find the right antidepressants for you
- Adjust your dosage or switch medications only under medical guidance

Management of Side Effects: Self-care & Lifestyle

- Keep a symptom diary to track any changes or side effects
- Consider lifestyle modifications such as dietary changes or exercise to alleviate side effects



Thank You!