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MailOnline

Happy pill boom as GPs hand out record 47m prescriptions... a rise of 9% in a year

By [Sophie Borland](#)

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Record numbers of adults are relying on Prozac and other so-called happy pills, according to NHS figures

Record numbers of adults are relying on Prozac and other so-called happy pills, according to NHS figures. Almost 50million prescriptions were handed out by doctors last year . a rise of nine per cent compared with the previous 12 months.

Experts said increasing numbers of patients are turning to GPs for help as depression loses its stigma.

At the same time, doctors are more inclined to give people a proper diagnosis and prescribe medication, rather than simply sending them away.

The figures, from the NHS Information Centre, show the health service spent £270million handing out such drugs in 2011, a rise of more than a fifth compared with 2010.

Last year, just under 47million prescriptions were handed out, a nine per cent increase compared with the

previous year.

But campaigners say doctors are sometimes too eager to prescribe antidepressants when there are other treatments available, such as counselling.

There is evidence that one-to-one therapy or group sessions are just as effective as drugs . but far less expensive. They also help address the cause of the illness . such as grief or lack of confidence . and, unlike drugs, do not have unpleasant side effects such as insomnia or sickness.

Marjorie Wallace, chief executive of mental health charity SANE, said: "The rise in antidepressant prescriptions does not necessarily mean that GPs are diagnosing more people with depression, but that people are being treated for longer periods on repeat prescriptions.

"The longer-term rise may also in part reflect a greater willingness of people to seek help when concerned about their mental health.

"Antidepressants are also being used for a wider range of mental health problems, such as anxiety."



Campaigners say doctors are sometimes too eager to prescribe antidepressants when there are other treatments available, such as counselling (posed by model)

The most commonly-used antidepressants are Prozac and Seroxat, which work by changing the levels of certain chemicals in the brain.

But they may not be as effective as previously thought, with some research finding they only benefit half of all patients.

There is growing evidence Britain is becoming a nation of pill poppers, with millions spent on an array of treatments. Earlier this year, figures obtained through Freedom of Information requests showed the NHS was spending £50million a year on sleeping pills.

This is a rise of a sixth in only three years.

Referring to the figures for antidepressants, a spokesman for the Department of Health said: "The rise in prescriptions of antidepressants does not necessarily mean a rise in patients.

"For example, shorter but more frequent prescriptions allow medication to be reviewed and can cut down wastage.

"People are becoming more aware of depression as a treatable condition and doctors are also more alert to its signs and symptoms.

⌘The most suitable care for patients is a clinical decision. Talking therapies are increasingly available alongside or as an alternative to medication.

⌘Funding for talking therapies will be boosted by £400million over the next four years and this will directly benefit 3.2million people.Ⓚ

WORRIERS RISK HEART DISEASE

BEING one of life's worriers increases the risk of early death, scientists say.

Adults who often worry or who lack self-confidence are up to 30 per cent more likely to die from heart attacks.

Researchers say constant stress leads to certain chemicals being released into the blood that raise the risk of heart problems.

The team, from University College London and Edinburgh

University, analysed data on 68,000 healthy adults spanning a period of ten years.

Those who had depression or a serious panic disorder were up to twice as likely to have died from heart disease.

But even patients who were mildly distressed and unlikely to be on medication were up to 29 per cent more at risk.

Researchers said more adults who suffer 'psychological distress' should have treatment.

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Of course the amount of prescriptions given out is going up, look how many more people that have gone to the UK, and they all get treatment on the NHS and that is not counting the people who on holiday and need prescriptions, more people living there, means more stress on the HNS, MY friend when she was there for 4 months took no tablets etc with her, as she was told to get her prescription there, as she was over 60 they were free, and here she would have had to pay for her 4 months supply, so how many more do that, don't blame her, blame the UK system. As for depression I had depression years back and when I found out that I could become addicted to the tablets, I never took any more, but I had a very good friend that helped me through it.

- born in the UK, but now live here in the, N I New Zealand, 02/8/2012 04:51

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Rose you're utterly ignorant. I've had plenty of really awful times in my life (death of a close friend at 17, just one example) and toughed my way through all of them. If you can get through it on your own, that is NOT depression. Depression IS a chemical imbalance in the brain, your levels of serotonin being through the floor and these drugs help fix that. I got post natal depression and was the absolute last person I thought would ever get depression. I used to think like you until I went through it myself. I'm an extremely capable, optimistic, just-get-on-with-life and very outgoing, confident person. Yet I got flattened by depression. You cannot simply tough it out (I tried to, believe me, but it was the wrong thing to do) and no amount of life changes would've helped me (I wasn't going to give away my baby, for example). It's like comparing the common cold to the 'flu - one you can tough out, the other you have to go to bed and let it run its course. Please educate yourself.

- Su, NZ, 01/8/2012 21:46

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me - you are 100% wrong. They help many, many people, myself included. Talking wouldn't have made a jot of difference to my post natal depression. It was a chemical/hormone imbalance in my brain post-pregnancy and the pills made the levels of serotonin what they should be. I've been off them for about 2 years with no issues whatsoever. Careful what you preach unless you've been in our situation.

- Su, NZ, 01/8/2012 21:38

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"Almost 50million prescriptions were handed out by doctors last year" +++++ "NHS Information Centre, show the health service spent £270million handing out such drugs in 2011" _____ So that's about £4.40 for each prescription which costs the patients £7.65 and that is over £110'000'000 profit. I wish I could spend this amount of money and still make a profit.

- I was looking for news, and all I got was this, 01/8/2012 20:49

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I feel so sorry for all those hundreds of thousands of patients with depression and other emotional disturbance being put on these ineffective dangerous pills by incompetent GPs who should know the evidence better.. All the evidence shows they do not work and can make depression worse. The correct treatment is a combination of things like more exercise and talking therapies.

- me, London, 01/8/2012 19:50

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Antidepressants are not 'happy pills'. This is a term coined up by idiots, who think the tablets make you happy. If you think that, then you've never had to deal with depression. It is then people who look at this and say "oh depression isn't that bad, suck it up, stop taking happy pills", that make people feel EVEN worse, and make them think they are making a big deal. It's people like this, who make depression so hard to effectively treat and deal with.

- Arran, Bristol, 01/8/2012 19:33

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I have worked as a psychiatric nurse. My own father has suffered from depression from as long as I can remember. Don't assume that because someone is anti drugging, that they don't understand the depths that people get to. As far as zoloft and relief goes - it would be extremely difficult to tease out the specific reasons for relief - there are too many factors involved in someones life. Someone who had been drugged with older meds may feel relief simply not taking those any longer. Long lasting crippling depression could have been *caused* by long term drugging. Zoloft has a high side effect profile and there are court cases being brought by those seriously adversely affected by it. No-one, I repeat no-one needs these drugs. Brain chemistry imbalance - this has been shown without doubt to be a completely made up concept, made up in the marketing department of one of the big pharma companies. If millions/billions have imbalances, take anti-deps, where are millions of success stories?

- Rose, London, 01/8/2012 19:21

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Most people have no idea what it's like to be crippled by severe depression. I battled it even as early as age 8 or 9. Different doctors tried different meds, with little success. Then came the new drugs, the SSRI's. Zoloft (similar to Prozac) changed my life profoundly for the better. It was explained to me that these meds correct an imbalance of certain chemicals in the brain. Whatever the process, it worked. I don't feel "high" or over-stimulated. I just feel the way everybody else looks like they feel! To say that doctors just throw pills at people to get them out of their offices and signal that it's the end of the appointment is not the case. There are many other cases of success besides just me, and I wish I could shake the hands of the scientists who invented these medicines. Don't criticise what you don't understand!

- Ricky, Atlanta, Georgia USA, 01/8/2012 19:10

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For as far back as I can remember I've been crippled by severe depression. My doctors tried every med available, with little success. Then came the newer drugs. Zoloft changed my life profoundly for the better. It was explained to me that these SSRI's correct an imbalance of chemistry in the brain. I don't feel high or over-stimulated with the new medicine. I just feel the way everybody else looks like they feel! Money well spent, believe me.

- Ricky, Atlanta, Georgia USA, 01/8/2012 18:44

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As for 'this is medical'....this is where the error is made. Medical MEANS of the body and of the mind. If you don't treat yourself as a

whole, and assess your whole life, health and situation holistically, then you may not make progress. And this makes people easy targets for the charlatans that peddle this rubbish with no solid evidence for it.

- Rose, London, 01/8/2012 18:32

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