

War on ANTI-DEPRESSANTS?

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RFK Jr, current cabinet Secretary of Health and Human Services has urged Americans to wean off SSRIs (Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor antidepressants), claiming they are over-prescribed, have harmful side-effects and are hard to stop. That may be his opinion, but he is not a doctor or otherwise an expert on the subject, and one official's opinion cannot override extensive scientific review by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or the knowledge of psychiatrists.

Yes, SSRIs, like aspirin, magnesium and antibiotics, have potential side effects. Except for suicide by a few profoundly depressed teens in whom an SSRI improved their energy enough to make a suicide plan, research shows that SSRIs reduce suicide in adults, which is most people who take them. Otherwise, side effects of SSRIs are rarely life-threatening and most that are serious can be assessed with simple blood tests. Remember that just existing is eventually terminal and we can choose to be more or less comfortable in our emotional lives while waiting for that day.

In my pursuit of trying to understanding his rationale for attacking SSRIs, consider that RFK Jr has expressed concern about America's declining birthrate, which he calls an "existential crisis," which is odd, given his environmentalist focus in his earlier life (yes, babies are a joy and cute, but a new life creates life-long carbon dioxide generation) so his SSRI concern might relate to some SSRIs causing anorgasmia. Or perhaps his ties to a Scientology-focused legal firm have convinced him that everyone taking SSRIs should just buck up, be strong and stop whining. He claims that they are "hard to stop." SSRIs require weaning off, not going cold turkey, which kindly gives some time to

assess their effect on the reason(s) for taking (or not).

Pronatalism notwithstanding, he has no evident plan for effecting the proposed anti-depressants use reduction or dealing with the fall-out. Reducing the availability of SSRIs might predictably generate an even more angry, depressed and irritable populace than we now have.

We should not return to the One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest frontal lobotomy days, even if the originator of that procedure won a Nobel Prize, electroconvulsive therapy-induced memory loss or Musk-endorsed ketamine (which works synergistically with SSRIs). The good news for those who benefit from SSRIs is that psychiatrists disagree with RFK Jr and no one person in government can overturn the FDA determination that their benefit outweighs adverse effects. At best, the discussion RFK, Jr started might reprise meaningful ongoing risk-benefit discussions between patients and their doctors. Furthermore, should RFK, Jr try to restrict SSRI prescriptions, President Trump might respond to complaints by SSRI companies' Eli Lilly, Pfizer, Johnson&Johnson and AstraZeneca executives, who would exert pressure to prevent it, risking loss of almost \$20 billion per year.