

MAYFIELD HEIGHTS, OH, October 04, 2013 /**24-7PressRelease**/ -- Just because your doctor prescribes a drug doesn't mean that it's safe, or even that the right amount was prescribed. Prescription drug overdoses are on the rise, and legal drugs are responsible for 60 percent of all overdose deaths in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Drug overdoses now cause more deaths than traffic accidents, firearms and falls.

The risks of some drugs approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are not limited to the potential for overdoses. Some are known to have serious side effects that can cause significant health problems or death. Yet they continue to be prescribed, even when the FDA has issued specific warnings.

For example, **proton pump inhibitor drugs** (PPIs) have been shown to block nutrient absorption and reduce the production of stomach acids, resulting in a variety of health problems that include bacterial diarrhea, magnesium deficiency and bone fractures. Long-term use of PPIs such as Nexium and Prevacid has been linked to a greater risk of unhealthy weight gain and pneumonia.

One of the most frequently used class of drugs in the United States, statin drugs, has been shown to increase patients' risk of serious conditions such as diabetes, liver disease, brain damage, atrophy and premature death. The FDA has increased its efforts to warn consumers and physicians about the use of drugs that many studies have shown to be medically useless in terms of preventing heart attack and stroke.

The acne medication **Accutane** has been shown to cause a wide range of serious side effects, including inflammatory bowel disease, ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease, suicide, birth defects, liver damage and gastrointestinal disorders. Although the drug was removed from the market, the manufacturer, Roche, continues to pay out settlements and jury awards for individuals who suffered serious injury.

Antipsychotics have been shown to promote rapid weight gain, elevated lipid and cholesterol levels and higher blood sugar levels. Drugs in this category include Seroquel, Zyprexa, Risperdal and Abilify and are used to treat both serious mental health conditions such as schizophrenia as well as off-label disorders. However, issues of weight gain and cholesterol are of far less concern to the FDA than the risk of long-term neurological and brain damage. The British Medical Journal declared them to be deadlier than terrorism.

Opioid prescription pain relievers such as Vicodin, OxyContin, Percocet, codeine and morphine have been shown to cause more fatal overdoses than the illegal drugs heroin and cocaine combined. The CDC has declared that the growing number of prescription painkiller deaths is at epidemic levels.

Antidepressants, known as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), like Prozac, Zoloft, Paxil and Lexapro can result in side effects such as sexual dysfunction, gastrointestinal bleeding and heart disease. Even more alarming, the SSRIs can make depression worse rather than better, increasing the risk of suicide.

Diabetes drugs such as Actos and Avandia have been shown to increase the risk of heart disease and bladder cancer. The manufacturer of Avandia recently paid out more than \$3 billion to settle more than 35,000 lawsuits over heart attacks caused by the drug. A government investigation revealed that GlaxoSmithKline had known about the risks of Avandia and had tried to conceal the problem.

Other prescription medications that appear frequently on lists of dangerous drugs include cholesterol drugs such as Crestor and Lipitor, blood thinners such as Pradaxa, Fosamax prescribed for osteoporosis, dialysis treatments such as GranuFlo and NaturLyte, and Propecia, which is prescribed for hair loss.

While physicians may be partly to blame for inappropriately prescribing drugs known to carry significant dangers, drug companies carry significant responsibility for the risks posed by their products. The drive for profits allows drug companies to regard the \$7 billion in fines and penalties they paid between 2004 and 2010 as just another cost of doing business, rather than a wake-up call.

One of the reasons that dangerous drugs go to market, complete with FDA approval, is that drug companies conduct their own safety studies. Moreover, drug companies are known to fail to report bad results. Moreover, many experts believe that side effects are studied for too short a time and that only small groups of people are studied during trials. Even when the FDA is aware of problems with a drug, the process for having the product recalled or relabeled takes many months or years - time that many patients do not have.

Ohio Lawyers Discuss Dangerous Prescription Drugs

Written by Australian Business

Elk & Elk is one of Ohio's premier personal injury and medical malpractice law firms. It represents individuals and their families in serious personal injury and wrongful death cases throughout Ohio and around the country.