



Putting Boris in the dock isn't just dotty. It's a deeply sinister attack on our freedoms

STEPHEN GLOVER: PAGE 16



VICTORY ON PILLS THAT DEVASTATE LIVES OF MILLIONS

Daily Mail CAMPAIGN

**SAVE THE
PRESCRIPTION
PILL VICTIMS**

Major U-turn as psychiatrists say patients must be warned of depression drugs risk

DOCTORS have been told to warn millions of patients about the severe side effects of antidepressants.

In a major victory for the Daily Mail, the Royal College of Psychiatrists today admits for the first time

By **Ben Spencer**
Medical Correspondent

that antidepressants can cause side effects lasting for months.

And in a move that could significantly reduce the overuse of the pills, the influential body said the potential harms are so serious that all patients should

be warned of the risks when they are first prescribed the drugs.

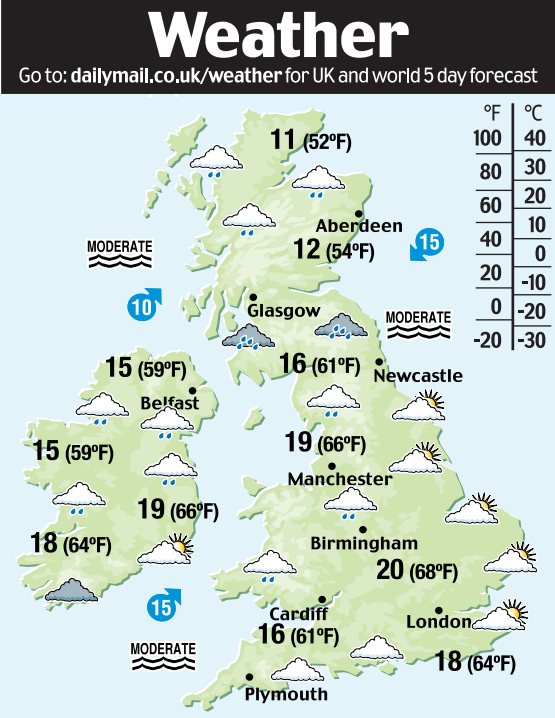
For years, health officials have played down the difficulty of withdrawing from antidepressants, insisting side effects were 'mild' and last no more than a week or two. But in a new 'position statement' published today, the Royal College admits some patients experi-

ence 'severe' side effects which can last weeks or even months.

In a major U-turn, it said the risk should always be discussed with patients when they are prescribed the drugs – and called on NHS watchdog NICE to change its guidance to reflect this position.

Britons use more antidepressants than

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Summary: A Mixed Day

UK TODAY: A rather mixed day for many with southern England and Wales remaining largely dry. However elsewhere across Scotland and Northern Ireland will see a wet day due to persistent showers. Max 23c.

Today's weather

	9am	12noon	3pm	6pm	9pm
London	16c	20c	22c	22c	19c
Plymouth	15c	16c	16c	16c	14c
Cardiff	15c	15c	16c	16c	15c
B'ham	16c	19c	20c	20c	17c
M'chester	15c	18c	19c	19c	17c
Newcastle	15c	17c	17c	17c	15c
Glasgow	12c	14c	14c	14c	14c
Aberdeen	9c	9c	9c	9c	8c
Belfast	15c	16c	16c	16c	16c

5 day forecast

	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
London	23c	27c	24c	20c	18c
Plymouth	17c	19c	17c	16c	15c
Cardiff	20c	23c	20c	17c	16c
B'ham	22c	25c	20c	18c	16c
M'chester	21c	22c	19c	17c	16c
Newcastle	18c	20c	19c	16c	15c
Glasgow	17c	17c	16c	14c	14c
Aberdeen	16c	17c	16c	14c	13c
Belfast	18c	17c	16c	15c	14c

Yesterday

24 hours to 7pm	Sun (hrs)	Rain (ins)	Temp (min)	Temp (max)
Aberdeen	8.8	0.00	1	14
Aberporth	1.0	0.08	7	15
Belfast	0.8	0.09	5	15
Birmingham	4.3	0.03	4	14
Bournemouth	0.5	0.04	6	15
Bristol	2.5	0.05	8	15
Cardiff	1.3	0.35	7	14
Durham	5.8	0.00	4	15

Moon and Sun

MOON rises: 3.31am, sets: 4.22pm
Sun rises London: 4.51am, sets: 9.05pm
Manchester rises: 4.48am, sets: 9.24pm
HIGH TIDE London Bridge: 11.41am
Liverpool: 9.38pm

Europe forecast

	today	c	f	tomorrow	c	f
Amsterdam	cloudy	19	66	fair	19	66
Brussels	cloudy	20	68	fair	22	72
Frankfurt	cloudy	20	68	fair	25	77

Around the world yesterday

	weather	c	f	weather	c	f	weather	c	f		
Algiers	Sunny	24	75	Florence	Cloudy	20	68	New Delhi	Sunny	40	104
Amsterdam	Sunny	16	61	Geneva	Fair	16	61	New York	Rain	19	66
Athens	Sunny	28	82	Gibraltar	Sunny	22	72	Nice	Sunny	20	68
Auckland	Sunny	18	64	Guernsey	Rain	12	54	Oslo	Fair	14	57
Bahrain	Sunny	45	113	Helsinki	Sunny	16	61	Palma	Fair	21	70
Barcelona	Sunny	20	68	Hong Kong	Thunder	26	79	Paris	Fair	18	64
Basra	Sunny	46	115	Innsbruck	Showers	12	54	Perth	Sunny	20	68
Beijing	Sunny	30	86	Istanbul	Sunny	25	77	Prague	Drizzle	12	54
Beirut	Sunny	27	81	Jersey	Rain	14	57	Rhodes	Sunny	25	77
Belfast	Drizzle	13	55	Larnaca	Sunny	34	93	Riga	Fair	16	61
Belgrade	Showers	23	73	Las Palmas	Sunny	24	75	Rome	Cloudy	19	66
Berlin	Showers	14	57	Lisbon	Sunny	29	84	Singapore	Cloudy	32	90
Biarritz	Cloudy	17	63	London	Rain	14	57	Stockholm	Sunny	14	57
Brisbane	Sunny	21	70	Los Angeles	Fair	18	64	Strasbourg	Fair	16	61
Brussels	Fair	16	61	Luxor	Sunny	39	102	Sydney	Sunny	19	66
Bucharest	Fair	24	75	Madrid	Sunny	21	70	Tangier	Sunny	27	81
Budapest	Cloudy	22	72	Malaga	Sunny	25	77	Tel Aviv	Sunny	29	84
Chagen	Sunny	12	54	Malta	Fair	25	77	Tenerife	Sunny	23	73
Cairo	Sunny	35	95	Melbourne	Cloudy	8	46	Tokyo	Rain	25	77
Cape Town	Sunny	22	72	Mexico City	Fair	25	77	Toronto	Rain	11	52
Casablanca	Sunny	23	73	Miami	Sunny	29	84	Tunis	Fair	23	73
Corfu	Cloudy	22	72	Milan	Showers	18	64	Vancouver	Cloudy	17	63
Dubai	Sunny	41	106	Montreal	Rain	11	52	Venice	Showers	16	61
Dublin	Drizzle	15	59	Moscow	Sunny	26	79	Vienna	Rain	12	54
Dubrovnik	Showers	20	68	Mumbai	Sunny	33	91	Warsaw	Drizzle	12	54
Faro	Sunny	26	79	Nairobi	Cloudy	22	72	Wellington	Sunny	17	63

KUROSU

EVERY day in the Mail you can play Kurosus, the most addictive brainteaser since Sudoku. There are only two rules:

1: Fill in each space with either a nought or a cross so there are no more than two consecutive noughts or crosses in any row or column. Important note: diagonals don't count.

2: Each row and column must contain three noughts and three crosses.

Today's difficulty rating ★★★

	X		X		
O	O				
X					X
		X			
O			X		

PLAY more Kurosus and 26 addictive puzzles like them every day on your smartphone or tablet with Mail Plus, your Mail newspaper on your screen. Get a FREE trial today at dailymailplus.co.uk

Solution on Puzzles & Prizes back page.

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almost every other country in the Western world – which experts believe is partly due to a lack of awareness about the withdrawal problems.

Campaigners hope the new position – which is expected to be written into NICE guidance later this year – will cut the huge over-prescription of the pills.

It is a major victory for the Mail, which for the past two years has been working with campaigners to highlight the plight of those left struggling to come off prescription drugs.

The Royal College has changed its position after hearing countless patients' stories highlighting the devastating impact of withdrawal – with the worst hit experiencing nausea, anxiety, insomnia and agitation.

Psychotherapist Dr James Davies, of the University of Roehampton, an outspoken critic of the overuse of antidepressants, said last night: 'This is a huge, dramatic shift in position by the Royal College.'

'It's a real step forward in trying to stop the widespread harms that have been experienced by people trying to come off these drugs.'

'We have been working very hard to persuade the Royal College to change its position and it has been the Daily Mail that has been giving voice to the research community that has called for a change.'

Psychiatrist Dr Joanna Moncrieff, of University College London, added: 'I'm really pleased to see this shift – it is really important for patients who have had diffi-

'A huge, dramatic shift in position'

culties coming off their drugs to have doctors acknowledge the problem and not just have it dismissed. Hopefully, it will also make people more cautious about prescribing them in the first place.'

Professor Wendy Burn, president of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, said: 'As psychiatrists, we are duty-bound to take on board the concerns of patients who've experienced more severe and long-lasting side effects of these medications.'

'Antidepressants can be very effective for treating moderate to severe depression, particularly in combination with talking therapies – and what we want is guidance that best supports their use.'

The Royal College's 23-page position statement said that when patients want to stop taking the pills they should gradually lower the dose, 'tapering' off the pills over several weeks or months to minimise side effects. And they should

PILLS DISHED OUT TO 7m OF US

82.5m prescriptions for antidepressants issued across the UK in 2017

41.6m the number of prescriptions made for antidepressants in the UK in 2007

7m people were prescribed antidepressants in England in 2016/17 – 16 per cent of adults

15 months – the duration of use for one in four users

8 months – the duration of use for one in four users

56% of people suffer withdrawal effects if they try to come off antidepressants

25% of patients have withdrawal effects lasting at least three months

4th UK's position in 2017 OECD league table of antidepressant use out of 29 countries

NOT A MOMENT TOO SOON PAGES 12-13

be closely monitored by doctors to make sure any side effects are quickly picked up and dealt with.

It also called for training for all doctors on 'assessing depression and its severity' – including for GPs, who prescribe the vast majority of antidepressants.

Antidepressants – which include common brands such as Prozac, Cipramil and Seroxat – are proven to be an effective way of treating moderate to severe depression. But experts are increasingly concerned about their overuse, with prescriptions in the UK having doubled in the past decade.

A league table of antidepressant use published in 2017 put the UK at fourth of the 29 countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, up from seventh in 2000.

According to the NHS, 7million people in England took the drugs in 2016/17. And the length of time people are kept on the pills has soared in recent years, with one in four users taking them for an average of 15 months compared with eight months 20 years ago.

The new Royal College position cites evidence unveiled by the Mail in October, suggesting 56 per cent of people suffer withdrawal effects if they try to come off the drugs. That study, published in the Journal of Addictive Behaviours, suggested that of the 7million people taking

antidepressants in England, 4million are at risk of withdrawal symptoms if they try to come off the pills.

Some 1.8million are at risk of severe symptoms and for 1.7million – 25 per cent of patients taking the drugs – the withdrawal effects would last at least three months.

The Royal College statement added: 'The potential for and existence of more severe and long-lasting symptoms reported by patients needs greater recognition, including in NICE clinical guidelines and patient information.'

'The recent evidence should also be taken into account by prescribing clinicians in discussion with patients before embarking on antidepressant therapy.'

'Discontinuation of antidepressants should involve the dosage being tapered or slowly decreased to reduce the risk of distressing symptoms, which may occur over several months, and at a reduction rate that is tolerable for the patient.'

Sir Oliver Letwin MP, chairman of the all-party parliamentary group for prescribed drug dependence, said: 'We are pleased that the College is now calling for NICE guidelines to be updated to reflect the fact that antidepressant withdrawal can be severe and long-lasting for many patients.'

A NICE spokesman said last night: 'We are currently updating our guideline on the diagnosis and management of depression in adults.'

'A consultation on this document is due to begin later this year. We hope the final guideline will allow people with depression to be offered the best treatments and reach joint decisions about their care that reflect their preferences and values.'

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b.spencer@dailymail.co.uk

Warning as cuts hit police forensic tests

A LEADING forensic scientist has warned that austerity cuts could lead to miscarriages of justice.

Angela Gallop, who worked on the Yorkshire Ripper and Stephen Lawrence cases,

said the police had been forced to choose which forensic tests to carry out.

She warned that this 'narrowing' of forensic science could lead to 'self-fulfilling prophecies' which point

towards a certain outcome. Speaking at the Hay Festival, Miss Gallop said: 'Forensic science is a very small part of their budget but it's a large part of their external spending. It sticks out like a sore

thumb so when they think of things to cut, an easy thing to cut is their forensic science.'

Miss Gallop added: 'If you only test certain things on items from a certain person, you will only find certain things. The danger is absolutely there, no matter how good you are.'

The National Police Chiefs' Council said: 'Police forces are committed to meeting the very high standards of quality set by the forensic science regulator.'

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