



Candlelight vigil for the victims of the February 15th shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL.

(Photo: Gerald Herbert/AP)

EDITOR: As our hearts break again in mourning for the young lives lost, and as we search for answers and causes for this ongoing tragedy, I use this platform to address a little-discussed and yet important factor in the country's mass shootings. This is an abridged version of a balanced article published on February 17th, which can be read in full at TheNewAmerican.com.

FROM PROZAC® TO PARKLAND

Are Psychiatric Drugs Causing Mass Shootings?

Selwyn Duke

While mass killers generally have guns in their hands, another commonality is that they often have psychiatric drugs in their blood. The difference, though, is that it isn't guns that have the side effect of "homicidal ideation."

The Parkland, Florida, shooter who murdered 17 on Valentine's Day was on medication for emotional issues, his aunt related. This is now a familiar story. As WND.com's David Kupelian put it Thursday, the following is par for the course: "As information about a perpetrator emerges, a relative confides to a newspaper that the troubled youth who committed the mass murder was on psychiatric medications—you know, those powerful, little-understood, mind-altering drugs with fearsome side

effects including *suicidal ideation* and even *homicidal ideation*."

Yet, as Kupelian laments, media outlets have little appetite for exploring this issue. Politicians don't, either. Unlike with guns, legal drugs aren't an issue that can be used to scare people and win votes. Moreover, as *The Guardian* reported last year: "Pharmaceutical companies spend far more than any other industry to influence politicians," having poured "close to \$2.5 billion into lobbying and funding members of Congress over the past decade." This dwarfs the gun lobby's political contributions, mind you.

But what about pharmaceuticals' contributions to mass shootings? Of course, *correlation* does not mean *causation*, but it can provide clues as to where causation may lie—and the correlation between mass shooters and psychiatric drug use certainly exists.

Consider Newtown, CT, killer Adam Lanza, who killed 26 at

Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2013. He also was on medication, according to family friend, Louise Tambascio. That's all we heard about it. However; as Kupelian points out, "There was little journalistic curiosity or follow-up."

BUT THERE SHOULD BE. As Kupelian informs us: "A disturbing number of perpetrators of school shootings and similar mass murders in our modern era were either on—or just recently coming off of—psychiatric medications." He then provides many examples:

- ✚ Columbine, CO mass-killer Eric Harris was taking Luvox—like Prozac, Paxil, Zoloft, Effexor and many others, a widely prescribed antidepressant, called Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs)." Along with fellow student Dylan Klebold, Harris shot 13 to death and wounded 24 in 1999. The Luvox manufacturer concedes that during



controlled clinical trials, 4% of youth taking Luvox—that’s 1 in 25—developed mania, a dangerous and violence-prone mental derangement causing extreme excitement and delusion.

- ✦ 25-year-old Patrick Purdy murdered five children and wounded 30 in a schoolyard shooting rampage in Stockton, CA, in 1989. He’d been taking “Amitriptyline, an antidepressant, as well as the antipsychotic drug Thorazine.”
- ✦ Kip Kinkel, 15, murdered his parents in 1998 and the next day went to his school, Thurston High in Springfield, OR, and opened fire on his classmates, killing two and wounding 22 others. He had been prescribed both Prozac and Ritalin.

WND’s Leo Hohmann adds to the picture, having reported in 2015:

- ✦ Jose Reyes, the Nevada seventh-grader who went on a shooting rampage at his school in October 2013 was taking a prescription antidepressant [Prozac] at the time.”
- ✦ Navy Yard shooter Aaron Alexis sprayed bullets at office workers and in a cafeteria on Sept. 16, 2013, killing 13 people including himself. Alexis had been prescribed [the generic antidepressant] Trazodone by his Veterans Affairs doctor.”

And there are many, many more examples. Of course, also relating to correlation, there’s a chicken-or-egg question here: Is it that taking psychiatric drugs makes a person more likely to go crazy and commit murderous rampages? Or is it that crazy people who are candidates for committing murderous rampages are more likely to be prescribed psychiatric drugs? **IN REALITY, MOST LIKELY IT’S BOTH.**

The truth is that because the human mind is complex and not wholly understood, taking mind-altering drugs is a risky proposition. Drug companies acknowledge this, too, mind you—just not very publicly. For instance, Kupelian informs us that: “Paxil’s known adverse drug reactions—according to the

drug’s FDA-approved label—include: mania, insomnia, anxiety, agitation, confusion, amnesia, depression, paranoid reaction, psychosis, hostility, delirium, hallucinations, abnormal thinking, depersonalization and lack of emotion, among others.

In fact, Channel 2 WCGH reported in 2009 that: “One study shows a quarter of all children on drugs such as Paxil and Zoloft become dangerously violent and/or suicidal.”

Of course, if these drugs pose such a threat, there should be a stream of high-profile lawsuits, right? Wrong. To avoid the bad exposure this would bring, drug companies spend hundreds of millions of dollars settling claims out of court and often cloak them with confidentiality agreements.

Having said this, it’s unlikely that psychiatric drugs are entirely to blame for mass shootings—for much has changed during the last several decades. We’ve seen a decline in faith and rise in moral relativism/nihilism, which relates the notion that right and wrong are mere “perspective.” Entertainment has become increasingly decadent and mindlessly violent. (Note that the Internet’s rise fairly closely coincided with the start of continual mass shootings.) The family has continued to break down, and Americans today, immersed in electronics, are often more connected to things than people. The fame committing a massacre brings can be alluring to lonely, disturbed people, thus breeding copycat crimes. This is to name just a few factors—it’s a systemic problem.

Nonetheless, adding mind-altering drugs to this equation adds up to nothing good, and this brings me to my story. I knew a good-natured man who was the epitome of even-temperedness, who had some problems and was prescribed an antidepressant by a psychiatrist (who’d never treated him before). Well, he swallowed one pill—only one, ever. In his case, that was all it took. Fifteen minutes later, he flew into a rage and was never the same again. Mental instability, irrationality and some violent episodes—in a word, insanity—would define the rest of his life.

Famed psychiatrist Sigmund Freud once believed that cocaine, legal during his younger days, was the best cure for depression there’d ever been. *Bayer Heroin* was once advertised as a remedy for all sorts of ailments. **ONE OUT OF SIX AMERICANS ARE TODAY ON SOME PSYCHIATRIC MEDICATION.** We ought to bear in mind that just because a drug is on the right side of the law doesn’t mean it won’t bring you to the wrong side of sanity’s line. ■