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APA Lauds FDA Committee's Finding that Antidepressants Protect Against Suicide

New CDC Data Show Link Between Warnings, Reduced Access to Treatment and Increase in Completed Suicides

Arlington, Va. – Today, the Food and Drug Administration's Psychopharmacologic Drugs Advisory Committee (PDAC) held a hearing to consider labeling changes on antidepressant use in adults. In response to the findings presented to the committee and its recommendations, Carolyn Robinowitz, M.D., president-elect of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), issued the following statement:

"We welcome today's consensus findings by the FDA's Psychopharmacologic Drugs Advisory Committee on two central issues:

- 1) Untreated depression puts people at risk for suicide and the label must reflect that fact; and,
- 2) Antidepressant treatments 'show a protective effect for suicidality.'

"The advisory panel also acknowledged new data documenting serious downsides to a previous label change – a black box label on pediatric antidepressant use – adopted in 2004. Since that labeling was initiated, there has been an increase in the number of deaths by suicide, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This increase reverses a decade long decline in suicide deaths.

"This new CDC information and the Advisory Committee's own findings on the efficacy of antidepressants in adults send a clear message: antidepressants save lives.

"Finally, while we remain concerned about the impact of any addition to the black box, we applaud the Advisory Committee's suggestion that, for the first time, the FDA place statements about both risks and benefits within the current black box label. This move will help physicians and patients make appropriate, informed decisions about any proposed course of treatment."

About the American Psychiatric Association:

The American Psychiatric Association is a national medical specialty society whose more than 37,000 physician members specialize in diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at www.psych.org and www.HealthyMinds.org.

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