

Psychiatrist suggests better tracking of positive drug side-effects that improve mental health

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David Nutt giving a presentation in Oslo may 22nd 2013 at Sirus.

(Medical Xpress)—Noted British psychiatrist and former advisor to the British government, David Nutt is suggesting in a World View column in the journal *Nature*, that a means be created for noting side-effects of drugs that offer improvements in mental health maladies. He suggests

that a database be created that allows people with mental illnesses who inadvertently experience improvements in mental health by taking drugs for other reasons, to submit their findings, because it might lead to the discovery of new mental health therapies.

Drugs intended to help those afflicted with mental ailments such as bipolar disorder, chronic depression, schizophrenia, have for the most part, Nutt points out, been found through serendipity, rather than basic research. Some drugs originally meant to help with infections, for example, have been shown to help lessen symptoms of schizophrenia. More recently, beta blockers prescribed for high-blood pressure have been found to help those afflicted with a bi-polar disorder. He notes also that there is currently a "crisis" in the field as there are no [new drugs](#) or even ideas in the pipeline for finding new or better drugs to treat mental illnesses. He suggests that perhaps the answer lies in the general populace.

Currently, if a person with a [mental illness](#) is prescribed a [drug](#) to help with another medical problem, and finds that it also helps with the mental condition, there is little in the way of conveying that information to researchers. Similarly, if people with mental illnesses self-medicate using [illegal drugs](#), and find improvement, there is really no way for researchers to learn of it. Nutt suggests public forums and databases be created that would allow such people to document what they've found. Software that looks for trends could then be used on such data, and if anything stands out, a study could be put together to look deeper to find out if such drugs might be useful as a treatment. It's simply a way of manipulating the serendipity factor, and thereby increasing the chances of finding drugs to help people with mental ailments.

Nutt suggests that perhaps companies that develop drugs could pay for the forum/databases, as they would be the ones that would ultimately benefit financially if "customers" found benefits for drugs that

pharmaceutical companies were already making.

More information: Help luck along to find psychiatric medicines, *Nature*, 515, 165 (13 November 2014) [DOI: 10.1038/515165a](https://doi.org/10.1038/515165a) .
[www.nature.com/news/help-luck- ... ic-medicines-1.16311](http://www.nature.com/news/help-luck-...ic-medicines-1.16311)

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