

New study to help people withdraw from inappropriate long-term antidepressant treatment

25 July 2016

One in 10 adults are being given antidepressants each year, but up to 50 per cent of patients could be given an alternative treatment, a University Professor suggests.

Antidepressant prescribing rates have increased over the past decade with now more than 60 million prescriptions for the medication being issued in England a year.

Tony Kendrick, Professor of Primary Care at the University of Southampton, believes between a third and a half of people taking them could stop and avoid side effects and feel more reliant on themselves.

He is leading a new study, funded by the NIHR, to identify safe, reliable and value for money ways of helping [patients](#) withdraw from long-term [antidepressants](#), where appropriate.

"We appreciate that stopping antidepressants is not easy," he said. "Withdrawal symptoms, including anxiety and low mood, are usually temporary but feel similar to the reason why patients were first put on antidepressants. Therefore people are understandably reluctant to come off the medication - they feel like they've slipped back again."

The research team will develop a web-based intervention which will be available around the clock, together with GP monitoring and 'buddying' support from people who have previously come off antidepressants.

This will be tested through a randomised control trial where participants will either receive the intervention or usual care.

The £2.4 million six year study is funded by an

NIHR Programme Grant for Applied Research and is a collaboration between the universities of Southampton (including the Faculty of Health Sciences and the NIHR Southampton Clinical Trials Unit), Liverpool, York, Hull, University College London, and Solent NHS Trust in Southampton.

Professor Kendrick added: "Antidepressant prescribing rates are rising very quickly and some don't need to be prescribed at all. We hope our intervention will identify where [alternative treatment](#) methods could be best used. If our programme works we'd like to roll it out across the NHS, publishing practical guidance for professionals, and advice for patients."

Provided by University of Southampton

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