

Seroquel a.k.a. "Serokill"



Seroquel is an Atypical (newer class) antipsychotic drug. There have been 13 drug regulatory agency warnings and 26 studies published from eight countries on the harmful side effects caused by Seroquel, suicidal ideation or behavior, heart problems, diabetes, violent behavior, and death.

The drug has recently been dubbed "Serokill" due to the growing number of military deaths associated with its use on soldiers and Veterans.

Facts & Figures:

- The military wrote more than fifty-four thousand Seroquel prescriptions in 2011, with 99 percent of those prescriptions written off-label.¹
- According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, during the last decade, nearly \$850 million has been spent on Seroquel, prescribed to troops for sleep disorders at a rate of 6.6 million prescriptions.²
- The FDA's approved Medication Guide for Seroquel lists "Risk of Suicidal Thoughts or Actions," as one of Seroquel's "serious side effects."³
- Spending by the Defense Logistics Agency within the Department of Defense on atypical antipsychotic drugs, such as Seroquel and Risperdal, showed a dramatic increase — a jump of more than 200 percent — with annual spending quadrupling between 2001 to 2011 from \$4 million to \$16 million.⁴
- In March 2012, U.S. Central Command removed Seroquel from the "approved" formulary, but there's no guarantee that it won't still be prescribed.⁵

Drug Warnings:

There have been 13 drug regulatory agency warnings from four countries (United States, Canada, Australia and South Africa). These include the following (note that

some warnings cite more than one side effect, so the list below may not be equal to the total number of warnings):

- 3 warnings on death
- 2 warnings on withdrawal reactions
- 2 warnings on birth defects
- 1 warning on diabetes
- 1 warning on weight gain/obesity
- 1 warning on suicide
- 1 warning on Tardive Dyskinesia (involuntary muscle movements, restlessness, etc.)

Drug Studies:

There have been 26 studies in six countries (United States, Denmark, United Kingdom, Spain, Canada and Israel). These include the following (note that some studies cite more than one side effect, so the list below may not be equal to the total number of studies):

- 5 studies on Seroquel causing weight gain/obesity
- 5 studies on Seroquel causing death
- 4 studies on Seroquel causing diabetes
- 3 studies on Seroquel causing heart problems
- 1 study on Seroquel causing violence
- 1 study on Seroquel causing Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome (*a life-threatening neurological disorder, with side effects including: high fever, blood pressure changes, confusion, coma, and sometimes death.*)

Side Effects Reported to the FDA:

There have been 32,737 adverse reactions reported to the US FDA between 2004 and 2011 in connection with Seroquel. These include:

- 12,689 cases of diabetes
- 2,021 cases of insomnia
- 1,907 cases of suicidal ideation/behavior
- 1,691 cases of weight increased
- 1,225 cases of death/sudden death
- 1,007 cases of obesity

- 1,001 cases of depression
- 970 cases of tardive dyskinesia
- 807 cases of anxiety
- 605 cases of hallucinations
- 357 cases of aggression
- 305 cases of mania
- 298 cases of psychotic disorder/psychosis
- 100 cases of self-harm (self-injurious ideation/self-injurious behavior)
- 97 cases of homicide/homicidal ideation
- 24 cases of hostility
- 23 cases of physical assault
- 14 cases of birth defects

References:

¹ Patricia Kime, "DoD cracks down on off-label drug use," *Air Force Times*, 14 June 2012, <http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2012/06/military-dod-cracks-down-on-off-label-seroquel-use-061412w/>.

² "VA/Defense Mental Health Drug Expenditures Since 2001," May 2012 Drug Totals, *Government Executive*, http://cdn.govexec.com/media/gbc/docs/pdfs_edit/051712bb1_may2012drugtotals.pdf.

³ Medication Guide Seroquel, FDA Drug Safety Downloads, 2011 <http://www.fda.gov/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm089126.pdf>.

⁴ Andrew Tilghman and Brendan McGarry, "Medicating the military: Use of psychiatric drugs has spiked; concerns surface about suicide, other dangers," *Army Times*, 17 March 2010, http://www.armytimes.com/news/2010/03/military_psychiatric_drugs_031710w/.

⁵ Julie Robinson, "Couple continues battle after soldier son's PTSD treatment-related death," *The Charleston Gazette*, 28 May 2012, <http://wvgazette.com/News/201205280085>.