

## MHRN RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

### **Widely publicized FDA warnings on antidepressants and suicidality may have unintended consequences**

Christine Lu, Stephen Soumerai, and other MHRN investigators have recently completed a national study to examine whether the 2004 FDA safety warnings and media coverage were associated with changes in antidepressant use, suicide attempts, and completed suicides.

Eleven MHRN sites participated in this study. This study used 2000-2010 data from the Virtual Data Warehouse and an interrupted time series design. In the second year following the warnings, antidepressant use fell by 31% and 24% in adolescents and young adults, respectively. The investigators examined non-fatal psychotropic drug poisonings, a validated proxy for suicide attempts. After the warnings, there was a 22% increase in psychotropic drug poisonings among adolescents and a 34% increase among young adults, suggesting under treatment of mood disorders. The investigators did not find increases in psychotropic drug poisonings among adults, who had smaller reductions in antidepressant use. There were no changes in completed suicides for any age group.

Widely publicized drug safety warnings could have intended and unintended effects. Under treatment of mood disorders can have severe negative consequences. The investigators urged that we need to improve risk communications to the public and to health professionals.

To read the full article in the British Medical Journal, click here: <http://www.bmj.com/cgi/doi/10.1136/bmj.g3596>.

We recently reported our investigation of measures to identify medically-treated suicide attempts using claims data in *Pharmacoepidemiology and Drug Safety* (Lu CY, Stewart C, Ahmed AT, Ahmedani BK, Coleman K, Copeland LA, Hunkeler E, Lakoma MD, Madden JM, Penfold RB, Rusinak D, Zhang F, Soumerai S. How complete are E-codes in commercial plan claims databases? *Pharmacoepi Drug Safety* 2014 Feb;23(2):218-20).

Our methods and expertise in understanding the impacts of FDA warnings are important resources for studying future risk communications relating to psychotropic drugs or those affecting the mentally ill.

If you have questions about these research findings, please contact [Christine Lu](#).