

## **ANTIEPILEPTICS DO NOT INCREASE THE RISK OF SUICIDE**

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An analysis published by the Food and Drug Administration reported an increased incidence of suicidal thoughts and behaviors in a retrospective review of controlled trials of antiepileptic drugs (AEDs) used to treat epilepsy and other conditions. However, these studies did not systematically nor prospectively study suicide, and in any case the number of completed suicides was quite small, four patients of 44,000 subjects. Epilepsy has long been associated with an increased risk of suicide, and whether AEDs are a contributing factor remains open to debate. Several studies subsequently examined suicide and have not verified this report; none yielded evidence to support a class effect that AEDs contribute to suicidality, and disparate results have been reported for different AEDs. Indeed, some studies have noted a reduced risk of suicidality when AEDs are used. Since epilepsy itself is associated with increased mortality when seizures are not controlled, there is a definite risk if patients do not take an antiepileptic drug. It seems appropriate to caution patients about potential mood disturbances when prescribing any drug that affects the central nervous system, but inappropriate to label AEDs as potential inducers of suicide. It remains possible that one or more of the AEDs may increase suicidality, but it is inappropriate to blame the entire class of AEDs if this occurs.