

Antidepressant drugs found in drinking water; pharmaceuticals have now become environmental pollutants

By Mike Adams

Wednesday, October 06, 2004

Pharmaceuticals are now being found in [drinking water](#), according to a study conducted in England. The study looked at 12 [pharmaceuticals](#) thought to pose an environmental threat, including painkillers, [antibiotics](#), and antidepressants, and it found traces of these pharmaceuticals in both sewage waters and drinking water. It also found traces in the rivers downstream from the sewage treatment plants.

This is shocking information -- apparently we are dosing ourselves with such high levels of pharmaceuticals that we are now collectively polluting the rivers, streams and even the drinking water for the mass public. Even though this study was conducted in the U.K., there's little doubt that much of the same story would be found here in the United States as well. Why? Because in the United States, these drugs are also being prescribed at alarming levels, and after people take these drugs, they are, of course, entering the sewage treatment centers and being dumped into the rivers and streams that later on are used to make drinking water for people downstream. (Which reminds me, check out a book entitled, "Living Downstream" if you want the details on what's really going on with our rivers these days...)

All of this comes down to the mass medication of the public with trace amounts of [prescription drugs](#). In another words, if you're drinking tap water that's tainted with these drugs, you're getting a little bit of Prozac whether you like it or not. And since we now know that [antidepressant drugs](#) promote violent behavior, including suicides and homicides, there's justified alarm at the idea that we're going to medicate the entire country with trace amounts of antidepressant drugs in one grand experiment. Maybe we'll just dump all of these drugs into the [water supply](#), and step back and see what happens. There's already been talk of dumping [statin drugs](#) into the water supply because they are presumably so good for your health that everyone should be taking them whether they like it or not.

All of this brings up an issue that has been largely ignored by the pharmaceutical companies, and that is: what is the environmental impact of the mass prescription and mass consumption of their drugs? If millions upon millions of people are taking these drugs, then the environmental impact is potentially quite large. These drugs are, of course, synthetically produced, highly [toxic chemicals](#) that not only impact the health of human beings, but also potentially compromise the health of fish and creatures in our oceans. This could be one of the reasons why ocean life is continuing to decline around the world, and it seems like it won't be very long at all before these prescription drug pollutants start showing up in shrimp, crab, lobsters and perhaps someday, even in seaweed. If you thought [mercury](#) poisoning was bad, just wait until you hear the announcement that shrimp is contaminated with Prozac.

Interestingly, most pharmaceutical chemicals are not regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency, and thus there is no enforced limit of pharmaceuticals in the drinking water. In fact, in the United States, there is no government agency that is even testing the level of pharmaceuticals in public drinking water on a regular basis. So it is possible, and in fact likely that these levels will continue to rise in the years ahead without being detected or reported to the public at all.

Of course, as I've often said on this site, if you're drinking tap water, you're probably quite foolish to begin with. Most people reading this aren't drinking tap water, and thank goodness for that, because prescription drugs are just one of the many potential toxic pollutants in tap water. You certainly don't want to be consuming this stuff -- instead, you want to be drinking spring water or filtered water, using a quality water filter such as a carbon block filter or a reverse osmosis filter. Distilled water is also good for drinking.

If you're not drinking tap water, the potential for exposure to these toxic pharmaceutical chemicals in the water is remote. If you're showering in water that has some tiny amount of Prozac in it, for example, chances are you're not going to be absorbing a very high dose of Prozac, or at least not high enough to the point where it would be biologically active.

But sadly, most of the population is drinking tap water, and that's where this is a real concern. Just as America Online is now being increasingly questioned over the environmental impact of their tens of millions of free CDs each year that are distributed all over the country, I think it is reasonable now for pharmaceutical companies to answer to

the justified accusation that they are manufacturing and releasing toxic chemicals into the environment through human customers. The fact that these toxic chemicals move through the bodies of human first doesn't make them any less toxic to our environment. They should be regulated by the [EPA](#), and they should not be allowed in our rivers and streams, and in a very real sense, pharmaceutical companies should be held financially responsible for the environmental damage caused by their chemical products.

Another interesting thought on all of this is that many plant [fertilizer](#) products and soil products contain treated biosludge, which also contains, of course, human waste. These biosludge soil and fertilizer products will also undoubtedly be found to contain levels of pharmaceuticals such as Prozac, Viagra, statin drugs, and antidepressant drugs. The question then becomes, what happens when you start growing crops in these soils? Are these drugs neutralized by the plants, or are they in some way absorbed by the plants where they once again enter the food chain when human beings consume those plants? Is there any regulation of the use of biosludge [fertilizers](#) that contain toxic pharmaceutical chemicals?

Sadly, we are increasingly living in a world that is polluted not only by heavy metals, PCBs, and [emissions](#) from gasoline engines, we are now living in a world where even our water is polluted with pharmaceutical chemicals which is a direct result of the reckless and widespread prescription of pharmaceuticals by practitioners of [conventional medicine](#). Once again, it seems that as long as there are profits to be made, everybody in the [pharmaceutical industry](#) is happy, regardless of the negative impact on the environment. In fact, I don't think you even hear much talk at all these days about pharmaceutical companies working to protect the environment. It's pretty much just, "Here, take this drug, pay us \$100 a pill, and then flush it down the toilet. After that, we don't want to think about it anymore."