

GLOSSARY OF TERMS



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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ADDICTIVE: a drug, especially an illegal one or a psychotropic (mind-altering) prescription drug, that creates a state of physical or mental dependence or one liable to have a damaging effect.

ADRENALINE: a hormone secreted by the inner part of the adrenal glands, which speeds up the heartbeat and thereby increases bodily energy and resistance to fatigue.

AKATHISIA: a, meaning “without” and kathisia, meaning “sitting,” an inability to keep still. Patients pace about uncontrollably. The side effect has been linked to assaultive, violent behavior.

AMPHETAMINES: any group of powerful drugs, called stimulants, that act on the central nervous system (the brain and the spinal cord), to increase heart rate and blood pressure and reduce fatigue.

ANTIDEPRESSANT: a drug that affects mood. Psychiatry’s first antidepressants were introduced in the 1950s, while newer antidepressants were introduced in the late 1980s/early 1990s. Antidepressants seem to induce euphoria (a “high”) and a sense of energy, but their mood elevating effects are short-lived.

ANTIDEPRESSANT DISCONTINUATION SYNDROME: a term drug companies and psychiatrists invented to evade using the negative term “withdrawal” when referring to the effects of an antidepressant causing addiction or dependence.

ANTIPSYCHOTIC: a class of drugs also known as major tranquilizers, antischizophrenic drugs and neuroleptic drugs. They are among psychiatry’s most damaging medicines. Thorazine/Largactil is an antipsychotic. Antipsychotics newly on the market are called “atypicals” (new), such as Zyprexa.

ANXIETY: uneasy thoughts or fears about what may happen; troubled, worried, or uneasy feeling.

ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD): attention: ability to take notice; deficit: a lack of; hyper: more than normal;

activity: being lively, active; disorder: a condition that has no physical basis but the diagnosis of which relies upon observing symptoms of behavior. These behaviors include: has too little attention, is too active, fidgets, squirms, fails to complete homework or chores, climbs or talks excessively, loses pencils or toys and interrupts others.

ATYPICAL: new, not typical, not like the usual or normal type. An atypical drug could be a new antidepressant or antipsychotic as opposed to older ones of the same class. The term atypical was used to market newer drugs as having fewer side effects than older drugs of the same class. Thorazine is a typical antipsychotic; Zyprexa is an atypical. Elavil or Remeron are typical antidepressants, Prozac and Zoloft are atypicals.

ANXIOLYTICS: another name for minor tranquilizers, antianxiety drugs and benzodiazepines.

BARBITURATE (BARBITURIC ACID): an acid used as the basis for many highly addictive sedatives and hypnotics (used to sedate or chemically restrain someone). Sodium amytal is a barbiturate.

BENZODIAZEPINES: are part of the class of sedative-hypnotic drugs that depress the nervous system and known also as anxiolytics, minor tranquilizers, antianxiety drugs, sleeping pills and “benzos.” Examples are Valium, Ativan and Xanax. Not all antianxiety drugs are benzodiazepines.

BIOCHEMICAL IMBALANCE: in general medicine, biochemical imbalances can exist. For example, diabetes has symptoms of weakness, hunger and weight loss, excessive urinating and constant thirst because of fluid loss. The physiology is that the body does not metabolize ingested sugars, so there is an imbalance of sugar—the regulation of sugar metabolism by the hormone insulin is defective. Tests can substantiate a high blood sugar level in the body. Insulin restores the sugar balance to normal. There is no test to prove that a chemical imbalance exists for any mental disorder. No X-ray, brain scan, blood or urine test can confirm mental or behavioral disorder.

BIOLOGICAL PSYCHIATRY: term used to describe psychiatrists who view mental disorders as physical—caused by the brain or chemical imbalance—which justifies the use of brain-altering drugs to treat them. From biology: the science of living things; the study of plant and animal life.

BIPOLAR DISORDER: a condition categorized under “Mood Disorders” and characterized by alternating episodes of depression and mania or by episodes of depression and “mild nonpsychotic excitement”—thus, “two poles,” “bipolar.” Also known as “bipolar affective disorder,” “manic-depression,” and “manic-depressive psychosis”—basically “ups and downs.” As with all mental disorders, there is no known cause for this and there are no tests to physically confirm it.

BODY CHEMISTRY: all of the elements that make up the body as well as its various reactions.

BRAIN: a physical organ inside the head that sends and receives messages through the nervous system; for example, it tells the body when something is hot and warns against touching it. The brain translates thought into action and coordinates energy. Scientists say that the brain is complex and poorly understood.

CARDIAC ARRHYTHMIA: an irregularity in the normal rhythm of the heartbeat. Cardiac relates to or affects the heart.

CARDIOVASCULAR: related to both the heart and the blood vessels.

CELL: an extremely small, basic unit of living matter of which all plants, animals and human bodies are made.

CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM (CNS): all the nerves in the body together with the brain and spinal cord. Some psychotropic drugs are called CNS medications.

CEREBRAL: having to do with the brain.

COMA: stupor, unconsciousness caused by disease,

injury, or poison. Prolonged state of deep unconsciousness.

COMATOSE: relating to or affected with coma or unconsciousness.

CONTROLLED RELEASE MEDICATION: medications that are made to gradually release a drug into the body over a 12-hour to 24-hour period to provide a consistent supply of the drug to the system.

DELUSIONS: false beliefs about yourself or the situation you are in. Certain drugs can cause delusions.

DEPENDENCE: having a physical or mental “need” to use a drug or substance regularly, despite the fact that it is likely to have a damaging effect.

DEPRESSION: a mental condition of gloom, or sadness.

DIABETES: a disease in which a person’s system cannot properly absorb normal amounts of sugar and starch because the pancreas fails secrete enough insulin. It is characterized by excessive urine production. The pancreas is a gland near the stomach that helps digestion.

DIAGNOSIS: act or process of finding out what disease a person has by examination and careful study of the symptoms and usually involves physical tests in the study of the facts. In psychiatry, diagnosis is based on observation of behaviors and symptoms only, not as a result of physical tests.

DISORDER: abnormal condition. In medicine, specific things exist for calling a condition a disease. In addition to a group of symptoms, the cause of the symptoms or some understanding of their physiology (functions and activities)) should be established. A “fever” is not a disease but a symptom of an illness. In the absence of a known cause or physiology, a group of symptoms seen repeatedly in many different patients is a syndrome, or sometimes referred to as disorder. In psychiatry

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their diagnoses are called disorders because none of them are established diseases.

DOPAMINE: a hormone (chemical substance) produced by the adrenal glands that are essential to the normal nerve activity of the brain. Hormones, especially dopamine, play a key role in the tremors experienced by patients with Parkinson's disease (chronic nervous disease, characterized by tremors and weakness, fixed expression and an inability to walk properly). Antipsychotic drugs lower dopamine, thus causing parkinsonian type reactions. Newer antidepressants can also lower dopamine.

DRUG: a substance (other than food) that, when taken into the body, produces a change in it. If the change helps the body, the drug is a medicine; if the change harms the body, the drug is a poison. Psychotropic drugs are referred to as "drugs" rather than medicine because they are not prescribed to treat a physical condition, but to control behavior and the symptoms associated with it, potentially poisoning the body in the process

DSM: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. The American Psychiatric Association publishes the DSM to provide descriptions of mental disorders based on symptoms or behaviors. Psychiatrists vote whether to include new disorders or keep existing disorders in the DSM, a manual primarily used to obtain insurance reimbursement for patient treatment. There is also an international manual, The International Classification of Diseases, which has a mental disorders section.

EXTENDED RELEASE: relates to the reduction in the frequency with which a drug is administered. It is usually administered once daily.

FALSE POSITIVE: A result that is erroneously positive when the condition it is testing for does not actually exist. An example of a false positive: a particular test designed to detect cancer of the toenail is positive but the person does not have toenail cancer. The positive result was caused by other factors that are not related to the disease.

GATEWAY DRUG: a drug or medicine that when taken can lead to the use of other drugs that are addictive.

GENE: a basic unit in the body that influences the inheritance and development of some physical character such as hair and eye color. Each person has thousands of genes, which determine individual physical characteristics. Psychiatrists say that mental disorders are genetic (inherited) but no scientific evidence to date has proved this.

HYPERACTIVE: in psychiatry, refers to child behavior, especially whose movements and actions are performed at a higher than normal rate of speed or the child who is constantly restless and in motion.

HYPERKINESIS: excessive muscular movement; spasm.

HYPERKINETIC: the condition itself, which is characterized by hyperactivity, or refers to the person who is experiencing it.

IRREVERSIBLE: impossible to reverse or undo. Some psychotropic drugs cause irreversible damage to the nervous system.

MANIC-DEPRESSION: a "mental disorder" with alternating bouts of excitement and depression—"ups and downs." More often called "bipolar disorder."

MAOIs: an older type of antidepressant called Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors.

Monoamine oxidase is an enzyme (protein substance produced in living cells) that has the function of getting rid of used neurotransmitters found between nerve cells. It was believed but never proved that low levels of neurotransmitters may cause depression and that if the antidepressant blocked the activity of this enzyme, there would be higher levels of neurotransmitters would alleviate the depression. Chemicals like dopamine and serotonin are also called "monoamines" and thus the antidepressants were marketed as being able to alter these chemicals.

METABOLISM: the process by which all living things turn food into energy and living tissue. In this process food is broken down to produce energy that the body uses to build new cells and tissue.

METHAMPHETAMINE: an illegal, man-made synthetic drug in the same class as cocaine and other street drugs.

METHYLPHENIDATE: chemical name for Ritalin, Concerta, Metadate, and Methylin.

MOOD SWINGS: sudden and extreme changes in a person's emotional state. Symptoms can include sadness, hopelessness and worthlessness and changes in appetite, sleep patterns and energy level.

MOTOR RETARDATION: refers to developmental delays, such as where a child does not reach stages of expected growth, such as muscle development, ability to focus or speak etc.) A motor skill is a learned series of movements that combine to produce a smooth action, such as lifting one's head, rolling over or sitting up.

NARCOTIC: a drug that affects the central nervous system causing dizziness, euphoria, lack of coordination and unconsciousness. Narcotic also refers to drugs that are abused as street drugs and can cause either physical or psychological dependence. Opium and amphetamines are narcotics.

NEUROLEPTIC: neuroleptic means "nerve-seizing." French psychiatrists Pierre Deniker and Jean Delay invented the term in 1955 to describe the effects of antipsychotic drugs. Most antipsychotic drugs are called neuroleptics. Neuroleptic drugs are also classed as phenothiazines (meaning tranquilizing effect) or major tranquilizers. Thorazine and Seroquel are both neuroleptics.

NEUROLEPTIC MALIGNANT SYNDROME: a potentially fatal toxic reaction from neuroleptic drugs where patients break into fevers and become confused, agitated, and extremely rigid. Malignant

means life-threatening.

NEUROTRANSMITTERS: (or Transmitters) small chemicals that brain cells use as messengers. They are stored in the nerve ending ready to be released. Of the more than 100 neurotransmitters now known, three are serotonin, adrenaline and dopamine (defined in this glossary).

NOREPINEPHRINE AND DOPAMINE REUPTAKE INHIBITOR (NDRI): norepinephrine and dopamine are brain chemicals called neurotransmitters. Psychiatrists have a theory that they low levels of them may cause depression or affect mood and emotions but this has not been proved. . . Norepinephrine and dopamine reuptake inhibitors are a type of antidepressant that increases the levels of both norepinephrine and dopamine by inhibiting their reabsorption (reuptake) into cells. As with other antidepressants, the precise mechanism of action isn't clear.

OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER: a psychiatric term that falls under the classification of "Anxiety Disorders" to describe a person beset with obsessions or compulsions or both and suffers anxiety or stress because of it.

PANACEA: a "cure-all"—the one remedy for all diseases; a solution for all problems and difficulties.

PANCREATITIS: inflammation of the pancreas, a gland near the stomach that helps digestion.

PARANOID: a chronic form of behavior characterized by elaborate delusions.

PET BRAIN SCAN: a type of brain-imaging technology.

PLACEBO: a fake treatment, using a substance like sugar or distilled water. The

PLACEBO EFFECT describes a phenomena (reaction) in which the placebo can improve a patient's condition simply because the person has

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the expectation that it will be helpful. The more the person believes they are going to benefit from a treatment, the more likely they will.

PHENOTHIAZINES: a class of tranquilizing drugs also called neuroleptics, antipsychotics or major tranquilizers and considered the first “chemical straightjackets.” It is a yellowish crystalline substance used in making dyes, as an insecticide and for deworming cattle and sheep.

POLYPHARMACY: the act or practice of prescribing multiple medicines, often in dangerous combinations or dosage levels. A prescription made up of many medicines or ingredients.

POST NATAL: existing or happening after birth.

PRENATAL: existing or happening during pregnancy but before childbirth.

PSYCHIATRY: means “doctoring of the soul,” but psychiatrists long ago dispensed with the soul and began theorizing that human behavior derived from the brain—a theory they have not yet proved in more than 200 years. The study and treatment of “mental diseases” through physical procedures such as drugs, psychosurgery and shock treatments of various kinds. As medical doctors, psychiatrists can prescribe drugs, whereas psychologists cannot, although there are moves for psychologists to be able to prescribe drugs.

PSYCHOACTIVE: the term usually means psychic energizer (antidepressant), although it is often used less specifically to refer to any drug with an effect on mental processes.

PSYCHOLOGY: literally means “study of the soul,” yet psychology generally does not believe the soul exists. Rather it tries to explain why people act, think, and feel as they do, without a scientific basis.

PSYCHOSIS: seriously mentally disordered (as in schizophrenia) characterized by defective or lost contact with reality often with hallucinations or delusions. The difference between psychosis and

neurosis is that in psychosis, the person is generally effect of everything and in neurosis, he’s more or less singly the effect of or has deranged thoughts on some subject.

PSYCHOSTIMULANT: drugs that affect the central nervous system and increase mental or physical activity. The term psychostimulant is used when a class of stimulants (see this glossary) is used in the treatment of a mental disorder.

PSYCHOTROPIC: mind-altering. Drugs with an effect on mental function, behavior, or experience. LSD, peyote and mescaline are among this category of drugs, as are Thorazine, Prozac and Xanax.

REUPTAKE: to use up, reabsorb. A psychiatric drug is said to affect chemicals that nerves use to send messages to one another. These chemical messengers, called neurotransmitters, are released by one nerve and taken up by other nerves. The neurotransmitters that are not taken up by the other nerves are taken up (reabsorbed) by the same nerve that released them. The process is called reuptake. Some antidepressants and antipsychotics are said to work by inhibiting the reabsorption of the chemicals, so that more is available to be picked up by other nerves. This supposedly increases the level of the chemical to influence a mood or emotion. To date, there is no scientific evidence to support this and scientists and medical experts say a chemical imbalance in the brain influencing behavior does not exist.

RESPIRATORY FAILURE: respiratory means relating to or used in breathing or the system in the body that takes in and distributes oxygen. Failure means a breakdown or lessening in the performance of something. Therefore a respiratory failure is a lessening or breakdown of the ability to breathe oxygen into the body.

SCHIZOPHRENIA: a psychiatric term to describe (1) a form of psychosis in which the individual disassociates himself from his environment and deteriorates in character and personality; (2) split

personality. In the late 1800s, German psychiatrist, Emil Kraepelin called it dementia praecox (meaning premature dementia—deterioration of the mind), then in 1908 Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler coined the term schizophrenia. In fact, people suffered from a virus, encephalitis lethargica (brain inflammation causing lethargy, also known as “sleeping sickness”) that was unknown to doctors in the 1800s. Psychiatrists simply dropped the physical symptoms from the diagnosis, keeping the mental ones: hallucinations, delusions, and bizarre thoughts. In psychiatry’s diagnostic manual, it says they “could not establish agreement about what this disorder is; it could only agree on what to call it.”

SEDATIVE HYPNOTICS: A class of drugs that depress the activity of the central nervous system, often prescribed to treat anxiety and induce sleep. A barbiturate or minor tranquilizer (antianxiety drug) are examples of sedative hypnotics.

SEIZURE: a sudden condition during which a person cannot control the movements of the body and which continues for a short time.

SELECTIVE SEROTONIN REUPTAKE INHIBITORS: (SSRIs) the newer antidepressants. (See definition of reuptake). The antidepressants were marketed as correcting a chemical imbalance in the brain that causes depression. However, studies have yet to confirm this.

SEROTONIN: chemical substance that is mostly found in the gastrointestinal (digestive) tract, where it modulates the rhythmic movements kneading food through the stomach. In the cardiovascular (heart) system, serotonin helps regulate blood vessels to control the flow of blood. It also plays an important role in blood clotting and is used in the reproductive system. Only about 5 percent of it can be found in the brain.

SEROTONIN-NOREPINEPHRINE REUPTAKE INHIBITOR (SNRI): norepinephrine is a hormone secreted by the adrenal gland and which increases blood pressure, rate, and depth

of breathing; raises the level of blood sugar and decreases the activity of the intestines. Similar to SSRIs, it changes how the brain handles its chemical messengers norepinephrine and serotonin.

SSRI: see Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors.

SOMNOLENCE: Sleepiness, drowsiness (a side effect of some drugs)

STIMULANT: food, drug, medicine, etc., that temporarily increases the activity of the body or some part of the body or central nervous system. Examples: Benzedrine, Ritalin and cocaine.

STROKE: a sudden blockage or rupture (the breakage of something) of a blood vessel in the brain resulting in loss of consciousness, partial loss of movement or loss of speech.

SYNAPSE: the place where nerve impulses pass from one nerve cell to another. They are the routes by which brain cells talk to each other. When chemicals (e.g., drugs) get into the gap between them in the brain, it affects the way in which brain cells talk to each other; e.g., slows or speeds up the messages.

SYNDROME: A group of signs and symptoms that when they occur together represent an abnormality or type of behavior. Harvard University psychiatrist Joseph Glenmullen says that in psychiatry, “All of its diagnoses are merely syndromes, clusters of symptoms presumed to be related, not diseases.”

TARDIVE DYSKINESIA: tardive, meaning “late” and dyskinesia meaning “abnormal movement of muscles.” Tardive Dyskinesia is a common result of the use of antipsychotics. The muscles of the face and body contort and spasm involuntarily, drawing the face into a hideous scowl and grimaces and twisting the body into bizarre contortions. Created by the drug damaging the nervous system, it is often irreversible.

TARDIVE DYSTONIA: dys, meaning “bad” and tonos, meaning “tension” or abnormal tension of

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the muscles; a permanent condition caused by psychiatric drugs such as neuroleptics that damages the tone of the body.

TETRACYCLICS: early form of antidepressant. The name derives from the drug's four-ring-like structures in a T-shape.

THYROID: a gland that wraps around the windpipe and produces hormones that influence every organ, tissue and cell in the body. It controls heart rate, body weight, body temperature, energy level and muscle strength.

TOLERANCE: the capacity of the body to endure or become less responsive to a drug or substance (often requiring higher doses of the drug for its effect).

TOXIC: relating to or containing a poison or toxin (poison).

TOXIC PSYCHOSIS: a psychosis generated by toxins, such as drugs, which act as a poison in the body.

TRANQUILIZER: a drug that is used to depress the activity of the central nervous system. There are major tranquilizers (also called antipsychotics) and minor tranquilizers (also called antianxiety drugs, anxiolytics or benzodiazepines.)

TRICYCLICS: older form of antidepressant introduced in 1958, the name refers to the three rings in the chemical structure of the drugs. Tofranil was the first tricyclic antidepressant.

WITHDRAWAL: the unpleasant physical and emotional reactions felt when coming off a drug. These can range from mild discomfort to intense pain and seizures, depending on the drug. Avoiding this pain is one reason why addicts or people having taken psychotropic drugs for long periods don't come off the drugs, even when they want to quit.