

Study of Chinese teens examines nonmedical use of Rx and suicidal behaviors

15 August 2016

The nonmedical use of prescription drugs and the misuse of sedatives and opioids were associated with subsequent suicidal thoughts or attempts in a study of Chinese adolescents, according to an article published online by *JAMA Pediatrics*.

Suicide is a leading cause of injury and death worldwide. The overall rate of suicide in China is lower than it was in the 1990s but suicidal ideation (thoughts) and attempts are still problems among adolescents in China.

Ciyong Lu, M.D., Ph.D., of Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, China, and coauthors studied 3,273 students (average age almost 14) from randomly selected schools in Guangzhou who were surveyed from 2009 to 2010 and followed up at one year. The follow-up group included 3,145 students.

Among the 3,273 students (almost 51 percent of whom were girls), 1.8 percent reported nonmedical use of [opioids](#), 0.8 percent of sedatives, 1.8 percent of stimulants and 2.8 percent of any prescription drug. Overall, 17 percent of students reported [suicidal ideation](#) and 3 percent reported suicide attempts at follow-up.

Nonmedical use of any prescription drug and misuse of opioids and [sedatives](#) at the start of the study were associated with suicidal thoughts. Misuse of opioids and nonmedical use of any prescription drug at the start of the study were associated with subsequent suicide attempts, according to the results.

Possible explanations for a link between the nonmedical use of [prescription drugs](#) and [suicidal thoughts](#) or attempts are the intoxicating effects of drugs use, possible mood-altering effects and the loss of inhibitions, which could facilitate [suicidal](#)

[behavior](#), according to the study.

The study notes limitations that include the use of self-reported data and the exclusion of students who had dropped out of school or who were not present when the survey was administered.

"Based on the findings of our study, effective prevention and intervention programs should be established," the study concludes.

More information: *JAMA Pediatr.* Published online August 15, 2016. [DOI: 10.1001/jamapediatrics.2016.1802](#)

Provided by The JAMA Network Journals

APA citation: Study of Chinese teens examines nonmedical use of Rx and suicidal behaviors (2016, August 15) retrieved 29 April 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-08-chinese-teens-nonmedical-rx-suicidal.html>

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