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From: Jim Gottstein <jim.gottstein@psychrights.org>

Subject: Follow-Up: Over Drugging of Kids in State Custody

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Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

When I testified to the committee on February 8th, one of the things I reported on was the pervasive over-drugging of kids in state custody with psychiatric drugs not approved for children and in combinations that had never even been studied. Representative Coghill challenged me on whether I had any proof and I informed the committee that as far as I knew the State is not keeping track of this extremely important information, but that based on what is being found in other states that have looked into it, approximately 70% of the children in state custody are on psychiatric drugs, many in especially harmful combinations. There is every reason to believe the same is happening to Alaska kids. I wrote to Senator Dyson and Representative Wilson about this issue in December of 2004.

<http://psychrights.org/States/Alaska/Kids/OCSHearingltr.pdf>

Thus, this is not a new issue about a problem negatively impacting many Alaskan children, but it is being ignored as far as I can tell. There is an article today by Evelyn Pringle at <http://www.lawyersandsettlements.com/articles/00660/zyprexa-medical-costs.html>, which includes a description of some of what is happening in other states. I have reproduced a couple of passages from the article below:

[In the summer of 2002, psychiatrist, Dr Kruszewski, was employed with the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, and charged with reviewing psychiatric](#)

care provided by state-funded agencies to identify waste, fraud, and abuse. He was also responsible for reviewing the deaths of individuals in state care who died under suspicious circumstances in facilities inside and outside of Pennsylvania. Early in his investigation, Dr Kruszewski noticed that almost all of the patients under state care were on drug cocktails consisting of antipsychotics, antidepressants, and anticonvulsants. The populations he found drugged most often, he said, were children in state care, the disabled, people in state prisons, and children in the juvenile justice system.

For instance, he says, Neurontin was only approved for controlling seizures, but "was being prescribed for anxiety, social phobia, PTSD, oppositional defiant behavior, and attention deficit disorder with no evidence to support these uses." When he informed his superiors about the high rate of off-label prescribing and warned about the risk of liability to the state of Pennsylvania if it continued, he was told, "it is none of your business."

In June 2003, Dr Kruszewski inspected a facility in Oklahoma that housed children from Pennsylvania after an unexpected death of a child, and found children were being overmedicated and housed in deplorable living conditions, in addition to being sexually and physically abused by staff and kept in unnecessary restraints and seclusion.

In a report, Dr Kruszewski recommended removing the children from the facility, "in order to protect other innocent individuals from morbid and mortal consequences of severe over-medication, including chemical restraints; emotional, physical and sexual abuse; seclusion; and dirty and inadequate living conditions."

A day later, Dr Kruszewski was accused of "trying to dig up dirt," and was subsequently fired in July 2004, because he refused to keep quiet and accept that it was none of his business, he says.

\* \* \*

TMAP required doctors to prescribe atypicals rather than the older, less expensive antipsychotics. "The plan," Mr Jones explains, "was part of a larger scheme designed to infiltrate public institutions to influence prescribing practices in which drug companies bought the opinions of a few key doctors and state policymakers, and opened the door for spending billions of tax dollars on dangerous drugs."

The Texas lawsuit describes exactly how the TMAP preferred drug list was developed in Texas in 1997, and according to the complaint, Dr Shon traveled around the country at J&J's expense to convince officials in other states to adopt the TMAP model, which is now used in 17 states.

The lawsuit says, J&J promoted Risperdal by influencing policymakers with trips, perks, travel expenses, speaking fees and other payments and that Risperdal was recommended as the drug of choice for children, even though it was not approved for use with children.

TMAP was highly successful in getting doctors to prescribe atypicals to kids. According to an investigation of psychiatric drug use by Texas children on Medicaid, ACS-Heritage, a medical consulting firm, found 19,404 teens were prescribed an antipsychotic in July or August of 2004, with nearly 98% being atypicals.

ACS also found that more than half of the doses were inappropriately high, almost half of the prescriptions did not appear to have diagnoses warranting their use, and one-third of the children were on two or more drugs.

The Texas lawsuit alleges that J&J concealed Risperdal's link to hyperglycemia, stroke,

and renal failure, to qualify for reimbursement under Medicaid, and that Texas seeks to recover money paid to purchase the drug for off-label uses and the cost of medical care for the people injured by Risperdal.

It is my hope Alaska will voluntarily do something about the serious harm it is inflicting on kids it is taking from their families on the grounds that they are not safe, and also those it is having locked up and drugged in what are called "Residential Treatment Facilities."

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The Law Project for Psychiatric Rights is a public interest law firm devoted to the defense of people facing the horrors of unwarranted forced psychiatric drugging. We are further dedicated to exposing the truth about these drugs and the courts being misled into ordering people to be drugged and subjected to other brain and body damaging interventions against their will. Extensive information about this is available on our web site, <http://psychrights.org/>. Please donate generously. Our work is fueled with your IRS 501(c) tax deductible donations. Thank you for your ongoing help and support.