

**PsychRights<sup>®</sup>**  
**Law Project for**  
**Psychiatric Rights, Inc.**

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## **Increased drugging will not control violence**

### *A Call For Reason in wake of VT shootings*

In the aftermath of the shootings at Virginia Tech last week, we are deeply concerned that the tragedy will be used to justify increased forced drugging and "outpatient commitment" of people who have been identified as mentally ill. Forced psychiatric drugging is already on the rise, with no measurable improvement in either the quality of life for patients or the incidence of violence in society. Indeed, the evidence shows clearly that people diagnosed as mentally ill are no more likely to be violent than is anyone else. In supposedly trying to prevent further crimes like the VT shootings, there is every danger that new laws will be passed and existing policies broadened to make it even easier to force psychiatric drugs on individuals whose behavior is seen as disturbing.

Psychiatric drugging creates more problems than it pretends to solve. Scientific evidence shows that not only have these drugs failed to moderate the long-term incidence and severity of mental health problems in society, but they have also created an epidemic of drug-induced emotional and physical disorders. Increased forced drugging of those who may be seen as possibly dangerous won't reduce violence, but it will expose more people to the many dangers of drugging. In the process, it will also seriously compromise their civil rights.

In dealing with this tragedy, we believe there is an opportunity to consider alternatives that are genuinely therapeutic and far less invasive than forced drugging and outpatient commitment. There is a wide range of non-drug approaches for support and intervention that have been shown to work, without the need of coercion. To name one, university and college counselling programs are worthy of more economic and institutional support. Efforts to build community and peer involvement are demonstrably effective in helping emotionally disturbed people reclaim their lives.

There will be a rush for quick-fix solutions in the wake of this tragedy. Some of the loudest voices in this debate will be calling for more psychiatric drugging, and increased government power to make people take those drugs. The evidence shows that solutions like these don't work, and that they seriously harm those who are most in need of support and

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community. But these events also offer an opportunity for a closer examination of the real needs of emotionally disturbed people, and a caring and thoughtful search for non-drug approaches.

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The Law Project for Psychiatric Rights is a public interest law firm devoted to the defense of people facing unwarranted forced psychiatric drugging and other forced psychiatric interventions. PsychRights is further dedicated to exposing the truth about these treatments and that the courts are being misled into ordering people to be subjected to damaging drugs against their will. Extensive information is available on the PsychRights web site:  
<http://psychrights.org/>.