

Volume 31, Number 2, November 2025

Revision

Do antidepressants cause more harm than good?

Mandy Wood

This quiz relates to the PSYCHOLOGY REVIEW Vol. 31, No. 2 article on the effectiveness of antidepressants and why they are still prescribed. If you keep both the article and your answers to the questions, you will have a useful revision guide for relevant exam questions.

Part 1

True or false

1 Irving Kirsh's meta-analysis included many unpublished studies.

True: Kirsch aimed to avoid *publication bias* by including so-called '*grey literature*', meaning unpublished studies. Using only published research, typically, increases validity as the publication process includes the rigorous process of peer review. However, studies with positive outcomes (the null hypothesis has been rejected) are more likely to be published than those with negative outcomes. Therefore, including unpublished studies in his study improved the overall validity of his findings in comparison with previous meta-analyses.

2 Kirsch found that antidepressants were more effective than placebos for about 25% of participants.

False: Kirsch found that antidepressants were only more effective than placebos for about 15% of participants, the people with the most severe depressive symptoms.

3 Antidepressants can cause severe and protracted withdrawal.

True: Clinical guidelines published in 2004 suggested that antidepressants withdrawal is mild and brief but research by Davis and Read suggests that this is not the case. They found that 50% of patients experienced withdrawal, which was severe and protracted for around 25%.

4 In England, around 1 in 5 adults are prescribed antidepressants each year.

True: 9 million adults are prescribed antidepressants every year which equates to around 20% of the adult population and this figure is rising.

Part 2

Multiple choice

- 1 Which issue and debate does Davis refer to in relation to the use of antidepressants?
 - a) nature-nurture
 - b) freewill and determinism
 - c) holism and reductionism**
 - d) idiographic and nomothetic
- 2 What is Davies's opinion about the serotonin deficiency hypotheses as a biological explanation of depression?
 - a) the scientific basis is strong
 - b) evidence is mainly from quantitative studies
 - c) it's an important theory which needs further testing
 - d) it is outdated – 'a relic of last century thinking'**
- 3 Davies describes the distress triggered by psychosocial stressors such as economic inequality and marginalisation as
 - a) resilient
 - b) rational**
 - c) unexpected
 - d) implausible

Part 3

Know your terms

What do each of the following terms mean? For each term, try to create a sentence that uses the term correctly.

- meta-analysis
- clinical trials
- placebo
- efficacy versus effectiveness
- serotonin
- statistically significant versus clinically significant/meaningful
- prevalence
- withdrawal
- relapse
- symposium

Pick out any other key terms or words in the article that you do not fully understand and find out what they mean. Remember, some of the specialist terms used in psychology may have different meanings when used in everyday conversation. Be careful about where you search for definitions – try to use credible psychology-specific sources, not just general dictionaries.

This resource is part of PSYCHOLOGY REVIEW, a magazine written for A-level students by subject experts. To subscribe to the full magazine, go to hachettelearning.com/psychologyreview