

Whopper of the Week: No, RFK, Antidepressants Do Not Cause Mass Shootings

IN SUMMARY

Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. (RFK) has repeatedly said that antidepressant medications may be linked to mass shootings. Ignoring the considerable evidence that there are no links between antidepressants and violence towards others, Secretary Kennedy insists that new studies are required to explore this discredited theory.

"At NIH we're launching studies on the potential contribution of some of the SSRI drugs and some of the other psychiatric drugs that might be contributing to violence. You know, many of them on there have black box warnings that warn of suicidal ideation and homicidal ideation. We can't exclude those as a culprit [for mass shootings], and those are the kind of studies that we're doing." - Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., [Fox News interview](#) August 28, 2025

WHY IS THIS A WHOPPER?

RFK's claim that antidepressants, especially selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), such as Celexa, Lexapro, Prozac, Paxil and Zoloft, are linked to mass shootings is a conspiracy theory, one that Alex Jones circulated after the Sandy Hook tragedy. Two recent articles ([here](#) and [here](#)) take a deep dive into the research to show that RFK's claims about antidepressants causing violence are just not true.

Perpetrators of mass shootings are no more likely than the general public to have used antidepressants. SSRIs are widely used in many countries, but mass shootings are much more common in the U.S. While there is no single cause, the absence of gun control regulation in the U.S. is a likely contributor.

Ragy Girgis, M.D., a professor of clinical psychiatry at Columbia [says](#), "There is no evidence to suggest that antidepressants, or any psychiatric medications, play a role in mass shootings or homicide, and the black box warning has nothing to do with violence or homicidality." Dr. Girgis's [research](#) concludes that antidepressant use among mass shooters in the US is actually lower than in the general population. Data from the largest [catalog](#) of mass shootings, spanning from 1900 to 2019, shows that the vast majority of mass murders are committed by people without mental illness. Similarly, [FBI](#) data on violence in schools shows that the majority of school shooters had not taken any psychiatric medicine.

WHY IT MATTERS:

Secretary Kennedy's repeated attempts to link antidepressants to mass shootings reflects his longstanding dislike for psychiatric medicines. During his Senate [confirmation](#) hearings he suggested, incorrectly, that SSRIs are as addictive as heroin; he has also claimed that they cause school shootings. In February 2025, President Trump issued an [Executive Order](#) directing the MAHA Commission to assess "the threat posed by the prescription of selective serotonin receptor inhibitors," and other psychiatric medicines. The FDA launched "expert" [panels](#) to explore these supposed threats, staffed by [members](#) with financial conflicts and fringe views.

"These meetings are a chance to advance RFK's pet peeves (talc, antidepressants, fluoride) with people who have been handpicked," said [Dr. Peter Lurie](#), a former FDA official who is now president of the Center for Science in the Public Interest. "Nobody would put forward these panels as representing the general scientific opinion on these topics." While the FDA has not made any decisions to date, they could eventually issue new warnings about SSRIs or restrict their approved uses.

Kennedy's focus on SSRIs is also a distraction from more productive approaches to reducing gun violence. The Trump administration has made [sweeping cuts](#) to gun violence prevention programs, slashing funding to the Community Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative (CVIPI), rolling back restrictions on machine guns, reassigning ATF and FBI agents to immigration enforcement and undoing recent progress in [gun safety](#).

While Kennedy says he is "just asking questions" and looking for "gold standard science" on the links between SSRIs and mass shootings, he is actually spreading misinformation and creating unnecessary doubt and stigma about medicines that are used safely by tens of millions of Americans.

Contributors: Miriam Rabkin, M.D., Aurora Horstkamp, M.D., Erica Bersin, BCPA, Benedicte Callan, Ph.D.