

International Akathisia Awareness Day: Boosting Knowledge to Enhance Patient Safety and Prevent Medication Harm

Akathisia is a medication-induced disorder linked to commonly prescribed drugs and can lead to self-harm, violence, and suicide

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EINPresswire.com/ -- The Medication-Induced Suicide Prevention and Education Foundation in Memory of Stewart Dolin ([MISSD](https://www.missd.co)) proudly sponsors International Akathisia Awareness Day, an annual day of observance on September 20th that raises awareness about akathisia—a frequently misdiagnosed and mistreated disorder.



The image shows a digital awareness advertisement for akathisia. It features a blue background with a white circle containing the MISSD logo (a stylized 'M' with a caduceus symbol). The text reads: "Feeling suicidal? It could be a medication side effect called akathisia. Learn more at [MISSD.co](https://www.missd.co)". To the right, there is a white graphic of a prescription slip with fields for "PATIENT NAME", "ADDRESS", and "DIRECTIONS:", along with several colorful pills (blue, yellow, orange) scattered around it.

MISSD has launched digital akathisia awareness ads on military bases serving all branches.

"Understanding akathisia is vital to preventing medication-induced self-harm, violence, and suicide," said MISSD founder Wendy Dolin. "It's crucial for people to be aware of the real risks and potential benefits before starting medications that can trigger akathisia. Our latest public health campaign, now reaching over a million active-duty military members and personnel on US military bases, is a major step toward greater awareness."

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These stories of akathisia-induced deaths have been ongoing for 30 years. We have to stop it and we must recognize responsibilities because it's a societal problem; it's a healthcare system problem."

Dr. Vincent Schmitt

While often associated with medications marketed as antidepressants, akathisia can occur with a wide range of drugs, including those prescribed for smoking cessation, acne, high blood pressure, asthma, infection, and nausea. Factors such as high doses, rapid medication changes, age,

gender, and a history of akathisia can increase the risk of developing akathisia.

Symptoms can include, but are not limited to:

Intense restlessness, pacing, or rocking
Sensations of skin crawling
Insomnia and violent nightmares
Severe anxiety and agitation
Delirium and cognitive confusion
Emotional detachment, and
Anhedonia (loss of pleasure or interest in activities).

Managing akathisia typically involves reducing or discontinuing the medication causing the condition. Some medical studies also suggest that high doses of vitamin B6 may help alleviate symptoms. MISSD advises consumers to appoint a "medication buddy" to monitor for any unusual changes in mood or behavior when starting, stopping, or adjusting the dosage or type of medications associated with akathisia.

In the latest episode of the foundation's [Akathisia Stories podcast](#), a French couple shares the heartbreaking story of their sixteen-year-old son, Romain, who tragically died after taking the SSRI paroxetine, sold under the brand name Paxil in the US. Romain had no history of depression and was not prescribed the drug for that reason. His mother, Dr. Yoko Motohama, said that after starting the medication, Romain "became increasingly detached and developed a sleeping problem. Each time I raised concerns about these changes, the doctor increased the dosage."

For decades, the risk of akathisia has been downplayed by prescribers and drug regulators, and concealed by



Romain Schmitt, age sixteen, suffered akathisia that precipitated his preventable death. His parents are interviewed on MISSD's latest podcast.



AKATHISIA STORIES

A PODCAST FROM MISSD AND STUDIO C

Akathisia Stories features interviews and news about akathisia and medication-induced suicide.

pharmaceutical companies through fraudulent clinical trials, paid "key opinion leaders" endorsing their products, and ghostwritten medical journal articles created by PR firms. "These stories of akathisia-induced deaths have been ongoing for 30 years. We have to stop it and we must recognize responsibilities because it's a societal problem; it's a healthcare system problem," said Romain's father, Dr. Vincent Schmitt.

MISSD has previously called on suicide prevention hotlines to routinely ask callers about any medications they are currently taking or recently discontinued. A [public health and safety petition](#) is now available for signatures and has the potential to make a positive impact both in the US and internationally.

"Educating healthcare consumers, professionals, and caregivers about akathisia can help reduce suffering and save lives," said Dolin. "Visit MISSD.co for free resources, take our accredited akathisia course, and watch our public health videos, which have garnered more than 1.5 million views."

MISSD is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit committed to honoring the memory of Stewart Dolin and others affected by akathisia by raising awareness and educating the public to prevent avoidable suffering and deaths. As a true grassroots organization, MISSD accepts no funding from the pharmaceutical industry.

Wendy Dolin

MISSD

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