



# Examining Side Effects and Emotional Blunting of Antidepressants

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## Introduction

- MAOIs and Tricyclics are old forms of antidepressants that are known to have large side effects (O'Mullan et al., 2014).
- Newer antidepressants such as SSRIs have less side effects, but are known to induce emotional blunting (O'Mullan et al., 2014).
- *Emotional blunting*: A reduction in emotional sensitivity along with a sense that emotions are numbed (Sansone & Sansone, 2010).

## Hypotheses

- Incidence of each side-effect will be significantly > for those currently taking an antidepressant than those not.
- Side effects will decrease with time (as in Crawford et al., 2014), and so be significantly < for those taking antidepressants for longer durations.
- Degree of emotional blunting will be significantly > for those currently taking an antidepressant.
- Emotional blunting will decrease over time and be < in those taking antidepressants for longer durations.

## Methods

### Participants

- 256 individuals (221 females, 32 males, 2 nonbinary, 1 agender)
- Average length of antidepressant use: 45.67 months

### Procedure

- 45-questions survey (Google Forms); distributed through social media, personal contacts, and e-mail.
  - 3 categories: demographics, side effects, and emotional blunting\*
- \*Emotional blunting questions were adapted from The Oxford Questionnaire on the Emotional Side-effects of Antidepressants (OQuESA) (Price et al., 2012).

## Results

- Found significant differences in the rates of side-effects among the three groups and in emotional blunting scores among the three groups.
- No significant difference between length taking antidepressants and incidence of side effects.
- Total emotional blunting was negatively correlated with time taking the medication.

## Discussion

- Findings suggest that side-effects and emotional blunting caused by antidepressants may outweigh benefits.
- It is necessary for research to be done to find new kinds of antidepressants.
- Future research should examine side effects of SSRIs versus aminoketones.
- Population was 86% female, so the study should be repeated with a representative sample of males.
- This study enhanced understanding of the relationship between antidepressants, side effects, and emotional blunting.

## References

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