

# Drugs and Doctors May be the Leading Cause of Death in U.S.

By Joseph Mercola, D.O.

At one time, the main title of my Web site read:

## **Doctors are the Third leading Cause of Death**

Many of you reading this have read or seen this in many places other than my Web site. This article, available on my home page, was widely circulated on the Internet and was one of the reasons why my Web site was initially popular. What you may not realize is that I am the one who made this analysis and popularized it. The original study was published by Dr. Starfield, a full professor of public health at the most prestigious hospital in the United States, Johns Hopkins. Her study never had the headline in it, but instead listed the published research documenting the various causes of deaths that doctors contributed to. I simply added them all up and compared them to cardiovascular diseases and cancer and came up with the above headline, which was widely circulated on the Internet.

Interestingly, when I contacted Dr. Starfield by e-mail she disagreed with the headline I had come up with. She did not feel that doctors were the third leading cause of death, but thought they were the number one cause of death because of their failure to inform their patients about the truth of health. Now this might be a bit too harsh as even if people understand health truth they have freedom of choice and can choose to use sugar, soda and drugs (legal and illegal) to compromise their health and longevity.

However, JAMA actually published a study a year earlier that could support that doctors may be the leading cause of death in the United States.

This finding is more of a speculation though, so below I have provided some other studies to support this assertion.

- In 1994, an estimated 2,216,000 (1,721,000 to 2,711,000) hospitalized patients had serious adverse drug reactions (ADRs) and 106,000 (76,000 to 137,000) had fatal ADRs, making these reactions between the fourth and sixth leading cause of death.
- Fatal ADRs accounted for 0.32 percent (95 percent confidence interval (CI), 0.23 percent to 0.41 percent) of hospitalized patients.

[JAMA](#) April 15, 1998;279(15):1200-5

[BMC Nephrol.](#) December 22, 2003

- Medication-related problems (MRP) continue to occur at a high rate in ambulatory hemodialysis (HD) patients.
- Medication-dosing problems (33.5 percent), adverse drug reactions (20.7 percent), and an indication that was not currently being treated (13.5 percent) were the most common MRP.
- 5,373 medication orders were reviewed and a MRP was identified every 15.2 medication exposures.

[Nurs Times.](#) December 9-15, 2003;99(49):24-5.

- In 2002, 16,176 adverse drug reaction reports were received, of which 67 percent related to reactions categorized as 'serious.'

[Pharm World Sci](#). December, 2003;25(6):264-8.

- Medication administration errors (MAEs) were observed in two departments of a hospital for 20 days.
- The medication administration error rate was 14.9 percent. Dose errors were the most frequent (41 percent) errors, followed by wrong time (26 percent) and wrong rate errors. Ten percent of errors were estimated as potentially life-threatening, 26 percent potentially significant and 64 percent potentially minor.

### [Serious and Fatal Drug Reactions in US Hospitals](#)

- Drug-related morbidity and mortality have been estimated to cost more than \$136 billion a year in United States. These estimates are higher than the total cost of cardiovascular care or diabetes care in the United States. A major component of these costs is adverse drug reactions (ADE).

### [Healthsentinel.com](#)

- The numbers of deaths reported in data sets varied 34-fold and were up to several 100-fold less than values based on extrapolations of surveillance programs.

[Am J Med](#) August 1, 2000;109(2):122-30

- About 0.05 percent of all hospital admissions were certainly or probably drug-related.
- Incidence figures based on death certificates only may seriously underestimate the true incidence of fatal adverse drug reactions.

[Eur J Clin Pharmacol](#) October, 2002;58(7):479-82

- In one study of 200 patients, ADRs may have contributed to the deaths of two (one percent) patients.

[J Clin Pharm Ther](#) October, 2000;25(5):355-61

- In a survey of over 28,000 patients, ADRs were considered to be the cause of 3.4 percent of hospital admissions. Of these, 187 ADRs were coded as severe. Gastrointestinal complaints (19 percent) represented the most common events, followed by metabolic and hemorrhagic complications (nine percent). The drugs most frequently responsible for these ADRs were diuretics, calcium channel blockers, nonsteroidal antiinflammatory drugs and digoxin.

[J Am Geriatr Soc](#) December, 2002;50(12):1962-8

## **DR. MERCOLA'S COMMENT:**

As health reporter [Nick Regush said last year](#):

**"There is no way to be nice about this. There is no point in raising false hopes. There is no treatment or vaccine in sight. There is no miracle breakthrough on the horizon.**

**Medicine, as we know it, is dying. It's entering a terminal phase.**

**What began as an acute illness reached the chronic stage about a decade ago and progression toward death has been remarkably swift and well beyond anything one could have predicted.**

**The disease is caused by conflict of interest, tainted research, greed for big bucks, pretentious doctors and scientists, lying, cheating, invasion by the morally bankrupt marketing automatons of the drug industry, derelict politicians and federal and state regulators - all seasoned with huge doses of self-importance and foul odor."**

**Currently, the [United States spends about 1.5 trillion dollars for healthcare](#), and the projections are that it will double in less than 10 years.**

**The sad tragedy is that we are spending all of this money on disease management focused on drugs and surgery, and our return on this investment is profoundly poor. More and more people do not have the energy they need to get through the day while millions of others are suffering with painful crippling diseases because they have violated basic health principles.**

**Often, negative health and lifestyle choices are made because of a lack of knowledge, and it's my passion to increase the public's awareness of the health tragedies facing the nation. I will give you, the consumer, the tools to become a major force for good health and to alleviate disease and suffering.**