

# Dispatch: SSRIs, Mumps, Childhood Obesity, EHP, Long Weekend

By ACSH Staff — February 12, 2010

## Drug Interaction

Researchers at the Sunnybrook Health Sciences Center in Toronto warn that [the antidepressant Paxil \(Paroxetine\) may reduce the effectiveness of the breast cancer](#) [1] prevention drug tamoxifen because it significantly inhibits an enzyme called cytochrome P450 2D6, which is needed to metabolize tamoxifen into its active form. The authors postulate that other SSRI antidepressants (such as Prozac and Zoloft) may have a similar effect as they interact with the same enzyme system.

“It is well known that drug interactions occur frequently and can be dangerous,” says ACSH’s Dr. Elizabeth Whelan. “Women taking SSRI antidepressants for whatever reason and who are also on tamoxifen should discuss with their doctor the possibility of switching medication. Fortunately, it seems not all antidepressants have this same effect.”

## Mumps Outbreak Breaks Out Further

[The mumps outbreak that began last summer](#) [2] at a boys camp in the Catskills and spread rapidly through close-knit Orthodox Jewish communities in and around New York City has now surpassed 1500 cases and is the largest in the U.S. since 2006.

“This mumps epidemic is a conundrum, just like it was in previous outbreaks, since most of the kids were vaccinated,” says ACSH’s Dr. Gilbert Ross. “The vaccine is known not to be 100% effective, but this is surprising. The bottom line is that it’s better to be vaccinated than not. The more you reduce your chance of getting a communicable disease, the better. If this was a more serious condition, like measles or chickenpox – which have serious morbidity associated with them – this could be a much more tragic situation.”

## Childhood Obesity and Early Death

A study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* suggests that [obese children are twice as likely to die before the age of 55](#) [3] compared to children with lower body mass indices.

“The study followed almost 5,000 Native American children without diabetes, beginning at an average of 11, for 24 years, and there were 166 deaths,” explains Dr. Ross. “That doesn’t sound like a lot of deaths, but when you remember that this study began when these kids were 11, and they were, on average, 35 by the end of this study, that is a lot. There were twice as many deaths among those in the highest BMI quartile than those in the lowest. Of interest, however, is that the deaths were ascribed to diabetes, obesity and hypertension, but not to elevated cholesterol.”

## Releasing Press Releases to the Press

In a surprising mea culpa, [the journal Environmental Health Perspectives \(EHP\) released a press release about press releases](#) [4], and their tendency to sensationalize studies: “However, neither the lofty nor the practical benefits of press releases are realized unless they stimulate media

coverage, and this requirement creates an incentive to produce attention-getting press releases that may fail to provide a balanced and realistic presentation of the implications of the research.”

“This is exactly the point we made other day,” says ACSH’s Jeff Stier. “Sometimes there’s a perfectly good study that says fat rats have babies with more cytokines in their brain, and that’s legitimate science, but the question is: How is it portrayed in the media? Often the press release goes beyond the study, and the EHP is saying we need to stick to the science. We agree, and we think all journals should adhere to that. Journals are so worried about conflicts of interest, but they need to be more focused on accurately presenting the science. We look forward to seeing the results of this resolution and we encourage other journals to do the same.”

### **Presidents Day**

ACSH offices will be closed on Monday in observance of Presidents Day. Follow Jeff on Twitter for the whole weekend at <http://twitter.com/JeffACSH> [5] to keep up with breaking news.

*Curtis Porter is a research intern at the American Council on Science and Health ([ACSH.org](http://www.acsh.org)) [6].*

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### **Links**

[1]

[http://news.yahoo.com/s/hsn/20100210/hl\\_hsn/paxilblockstamoxifenlowerssurvivaloddsagainstbreastcancer;\\_ylt=AIF2V](http://news.yahoo.com/s/hsn/20100210/hl_hsn/paxilblockstamoxifenlowerssurvivaloddsagainstbreastcancer;_ylt=AIF2V)

[2]

[http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20100211/ap\\_on\\_he\\_me/us\\_med\\_mumps\\_outbreak;\\_ylt=Agoo2mmM0qB\\_KKZczKV7lzTV](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20100211/ap_on_he_me/us_med_mumps_outbreak;_ylt=Agoo2mmM0qB_KKZczKV7lzTV)

[3]

[http://news.yahoo.com/s/hsn/20100210/hl\\_hsn/prematuredeathcouldawaitobesekids;\\_ylt=AnIHEjJF1stN2t0kY7\\_TspjVJ](http://news.yahoo.com/s/hsn/20100210/hl_hsn/prematuredeathcouldawaitobesekids;_ylt=AnIHEjJF1stN2t0kY7_TspjVJ)

[4]

<http://ehp03.niehs.nih.gov/article/fetchArticle.action;jsessionId=1729AE76E997AC14EF36B1DC26D71AEF?articleURI=>

[5] <http://twitter.com/JeffACSH>

[6] <https://www.acsh.org/././..>