

New Adverts on the London Underground Are Increasing Akathisia Awareness to Reduce Suicide

Akathisia is an adverse drug effect that can cause violence, self-harm, and medication-induced suicide.

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[/EINPresswire.com/](https://EINPresswire.com/) -- More than a thousand new public health adverts running on the London Underground inform riders of akathisia, a critical adverse drug effect that can cause violence, self-harm, and medication-induced suicide. The Tube adverts are sponsored by the Medication-Induced Suicide Prevention and Education Foundation in Memory of Stewart Dolin ([MISSD](https://MISSD.org)). The US-based charity previously ran mass transit adverts in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco and on billboards in rural America.



More than 100 adverts are currently running on the Tube to increase akathisia awareness.

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Wendy Dolin, MISSD Founder

“Passengers on the Tube are routinely informed to “Mind the Gap” at each stop to help ensure a safe journey,” said MISSD founder Wendy Dolin. “Similarly, our train adverts spotlight a major healthcare gap so that patients can be better informed and safer. Most patients have never heard of akathisia, and some prescribers are unaware of the causes, symptoms, and potentially fatal risks.”

The charity was last in London when the Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCPsych) accepted MISSD's proposal to present akathisia information at RCP's 2019 International Congress. During the akathisia session, Dr. Lade Smith, recipient of RCPsych's Psychiatrist of the Year award, also made a presentation that noted, “Akathisia is common. If you don't look for it, you won't see it.”

“Both presentations received positive feedback, and we were pleased to help educate doctors,”

said Dolin. "Some attendees expressed that MISSD should not know more about akathisia than doctors know and said akathisia awareness and medical training are needed. Their statements did not surprise me because the akathisia knowledge gap is universal: MISSD frequently hears from people worldwide who share similar stories of iatrogenic injuries and avoidable deaths precipitated by akathisia."

Akathisia is often missed or misdiagnosed as treatment-resistant depression, emotional lability, Medically Unexplained Symptoms (MUS), and Functional Neurological Disorder (FND). Hundreds of drugs commonly prescribed for various ailments can cause akathisia. These include drugs for asthma, high blood pressure, insomnia, acne, nausea, hair loss, and depression. Akathisia symptoms can consist of agitation, inner and outer restlessness, skin-crawling sensations, insomnia, violent nightmares, delirium, anxiety, and increased physical movements.

"There are several reasons why akathisia is misdiagnosed and underreported. Pharmaceutical companies aren't required to release all clinical trial data, and akathisia was hidden or miscoded in several drug trials," said Dolin. "Patient Information Leaflets (PILs) sometimes state the drug can increase the risk of suicide, but they don't cite akathisia as the probable cause. Other PILs that list akathisia downplay its serious risks by defining akathisia as merely 'restlessness.' This increases the likelihood that the adverse psychiatric effects caused by akathisia may falsely be attributed to life challenges or patients' underlying conditions--and not to the pharmaceutical products. Many suicide prevention and mental health charities also fail to mention or explain akathisia. MISSD's latest public health video is the [first suicide prevention video](#) to include akathisia as a suicide risk factor," said Dolin.

MISSD states patients should be closely monitored whenever starting, stopping, or changing the dosage or type of certain medications, and caregivers should be informed to watch for and report any unusual changes in behavior. "In recent years, RCPsych has formally acknowledged antidepressant withdrawal problems, one of which can be withdrawal akathisia. We hope they, and all medical organizations, will start informing the public about akathisia and provide training for healthcare professionals," said Dolin. "MISSD offers a variety of educational materials including an accredited 1-hour online akathisia course. All our materials are freely available to



anyone."

The London adverts are different from those that MISSD ran in the US. The Tube copy required modification to meet the British Advertising Code. "Specifically, the word rare was added and two drug classes named so that MISSD could bring akathisia awareness to Londoners," said Dolin. "Whether akathisia is rare depends upon the specific drug one is taking and the medical research or experts one chooses to believe. While published risk statistics vary, what is constant is that people must be informed about akathisia to improve patient safety and healthcare outcomes."

MISSD is an authentic grassroots nonprofit that accepts no money from the pharmaceutical industry. For more information, see [MISSD.co](https://www.missd.co).

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