



### **Suicide risk climbs in first days using antidepressants**

By Kay Lazar

The risk of suicidal behavior among children and adults is greatest during the first month after starting antidepressants, says a new study by Boston researchers.

But the findings leave unanswered a burning question: whether the drugs themselves increase the risk of suicidal impulses.

"In the first one to nine days, people were four times more likely to have suicidal thoughts or behaviors compared to people treated for 90 days or longer," said Dr. James Kaye, a Boston University School of Medicine epidemiologist. He is a co-author of the report in today's *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Kaye said it is possible the drugs may have triggered the suicidal impulses or it may just be that it takes time for the medications to kick in and patients' illnesses are at their worst during that period.

"It still leaves all of us with unanswered questions, so when a parent says, 'Is this going to make my child worse?' we don't know," said **Carol Glod**, director of developmental studies at **McLean Hospital** in Belmont. Glod was not involved in the BU study.

In March, the federal Food and Drug Administration asked manufacturers to put warning labels on 10 antidepressants, saying doctors and families of patients should look for problems when adults or children are first placed on the drugs.

The FDA is still studying whether the drugs pose increased suicidal risks among children, as some reports have suggested.

The new BU study, which tracked more than 2,600 British patients, also found no "substantial difference" of suicidal risks when newer drugs such as Paxil and Prozac were compared to an older class of medications known as tricyclics, including Elavil.