

New Arizona Billboard Aims to Reduce Suicide by Increasing Akathisia Awareness

Akathisia is a medication-induced disorder that can cause self harm, violence, and suicide

CHICAGO, IL, UNITED STATES, August 29, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Medication-Induced Suicide Prevention and Education Foundation ([MISSD](https://www.missd.org)) has unveiled a new Arizona billboard to raise awareness of akathisia. The Phoenix area public health ad runs through September 20th which is International Akathisia Awareness Day.



A new public health ad in Phoenix increases akathisia awareness

Darius Ghanat and his parents cosponsored the campaign to help educate the public about this often overlooked disorder. Ghanat developed akathisia after being prescribed several medications off-label. Off-label prescribing is when a medication is used in a manner that is not approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Despite having no history of depression, he was ostensibly prescribed antidepressants and antipsychotics to treat symptoms of Tourette Syndrome.

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Darla Ghanat, mother and patient safety advocate

“I was 17 and looking forward to attending college on a full academic scholarship,” said Ghanat, now 30. “But akathisia and related iatrogenic harm robbed me of that opportunity.”

A wide variety of commonly-prescribed medications are associated with akathisia. They include drugs for acne, nausea, depression, and asthma. Symptoms of akathisia can include intense feelings of inner and outer restlessness, violent nightmares, anxiety, insomnia, agitation, pacing, skin crawling sensations, and unusual thoughts and behaviors.

"Tragically, many healthcare professionals, even experts, remain unaware of akathisia. This lack of knowledge led to my son's misdiagnosis and mistreatment," said Darla Ghanat. "Today our family [advocates for increased awareness](#) and transparency so that other families might receive informed consent and the information needed to make healthcare decisions. We strategically chose the Phoenix location so that the billboard will reach college-age students on their way to classes."

The FDA has a [black box suicidality warning](#) on all Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs) for ages 25 and under. However, consumers and caregivers are often uninformed of the FDA warning, or the warning is downplayed by prescribers. SSRIs are marketed under various brand names such as Zoloft, Prozac, and Paxil.

"This collaborative campaign is a special effort to spotlight akathisia and its impact on families," said Wendy Dolin, MISSD founder. "Unfortunately, what happened to Darius is more common than the pharmaceutical industry wants the public to believe. In addition, suicide prevention and mental health organizations often talk about taking suicide out of the darkness, but are deadly silent about publicizing akathisia. Many of these organizations have strong financial ties to the pharmaceutical industry," said Dolin.



Darius Ghanat, advocate and akathisia survivor



Akathisia Awareness Saves Lives

MISSD is an authentic, grassroots nonprofit and accepts no funding from the pharmaceutical industry. All educational resources are available to the public free of charge. Visit MISSD.co for

more info, public health videos, accredited courses, and podcasts.

Wendy Dolin

MISSD

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