

BMJ 2004;328:1458 (19 June), doi:10.1136/bmj.328.7454.1458

**News****Bush plans to screen whole US population for mental illness**

Jeanne Lenzer

*New York*

A sweeping mental health initiative will be unveiled by President George W Bush in July. The plan promises to integrate mentally ill patients fully into the community by providing "services in the community, rather than institutions," according to a March 2004 progress report entitled New Freedom Initiative ([www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/newfreedom/toc-2004.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/newfreedom/toc-2004.html)). While some praise the plan's goals, others say it protects the profits of drug companies at the expense of the public.

Bush established the New Freedom Commission on Mental Health in April 2002 to conduct a "comprehensive study of the United States mental health service delivery system." The commission issued its recommendations in July 2003. Bush instructed more than 25 federal agencies to develop an implementation plan based on those recommendations.

The president's commission found that "despite their prevalence, mental disorders often go undiagnosed" and recommended comprehensive mental health screening for "consumers of all ages," including preschool children. According to the commission, "Each year, young children are expelled from preschools and childcare facilities for severely disruptive behaviours and emotional disorders." Schools, wrote the commission, are in a "key position" to screen the 52 million students and 6 million adults who work at the schools.

The commission also recommended "Linkage [of screening] with treatment and supports" including "state-of-the-art treatments" using "specific medications for specific conditions." The commission commended the Texas Medication Algorithm Project (TMAP) as a "model" medication treatment plan that "illustrates an evidence-based practice that results in better consumer outcomes."

Dr Darrel Regier, director of research at the American Psychiatric Association (APA), lauded the president's initiative and the Texas project model saying, "What's nice about TMAP is that this is a logical plan based on efficacy data from clinical trials."

He said the association has called for increased funding for implementation of the overall plan.

But the Texas project, which promotes the use of newer, more expensive antidepressants and antipsychotic drugs, sparked off controversy when Allen Jones, an employee of the Pennsylvania Office of the Inspector General, revealed that key officials with influence over the medication plan in his state received money and perks from drug companies with a stake in the medication algorithm (15 May, p1153). He was sacked this week for speaking to the *BMJ* and the *New York Times*.

The Texas project started in 1995 as an alliance of individuals from the pharmaceutical industry, the University of Texas, and the mental health and corrections systems of Texas. The project was funded by a Robert Wood Johnson grant—and by several drug companies.

Mr Jones told the *BMJ* that the same "political/pharmaceutical alliance" that generated the Texas project was behind the recommendations of the New Freedom Commission, which, according to his whistleblower report, were "poised to consolidate the TMAP effort into a comprehensive national policy to treat mental illness with expensive, patented medications of questionable benefit and deadly side effects, and to force private insurers to pick up more of the tab" (<http://psychrights.org/Drugs/AllenJonesTMAPJanuary20.pdf>).

Larry D Sasich, research associate with *Public Citizen* in Washington, DC, told the *BMJ* that studies in both the United States and Great Britain suggest that "using the older drugs first makes sense. There's nothing in the labeling of the newer atypical antipsychotic drugs that suggests they are superior in efficacy to haloperidol [an older "typical" antipsychotic]. There has to be an enormous amount of unnecessary expenditures for the newer drugs."

Olanzapine (trade name Zyprexa), one of the atypical antipsychotic drugs recommended as a first line drug in the Texas algorithm, grossed \$4.28bn (£2.35bn; €3.56bn) worldwide in 2003 and is Eli Lilly's top selling drug. A 2003 *New York Times* article by Gardiner Harris reported that 70% of olanzapine sales are paid for by government agencies, such as Medicare and Medicaid.

Eli Lilly, manufacturer of olanzapine, has multiple ties to the Bush administration. George Bush Sr was a member of Lilly's board of directors and Bush Jr appointed Lilly's chief executive officer, Sidney Taurel, to a seat on the



Homeland Security Council. Lilly made \$1.6m in political contributions in 2000—82% of which went to Bush and the Republican Party.

Jones points out that the companies that helped to start up the Texas project have been, and still are, big contributors to the election funds of George W Bush. In addition, some members of the New Freedom Commission have served on advisory boards for these same companies, while others have direct ties to the Texas Medication Algorithm Project.

Bush was the governor of Texas during the development of the Texas project, and, during his 2000 presidential campaign, he boasted of his support for the project and the fact that the legislation he passed expanded Medicaid coverage of psychotropic drugs.

Bush is the clear front runner when it comes to drug company contributions. According to the Center for Responsive Politics (CRP), manufacturers of drugs and health products have contributed \$764 274 to the 2004 Bush campaign through their political action committees and employees—far outstripping the \$149 400 given to his chief rival, John Kerry, by 26 April.

**Drug companies have contributed three times more to the campaign of George Bush, seen here campaigning in Florida, than to that of his rival John Kerry**

Credit: GERALD HERBERT/AP

Drug companies have fared exceedingly well under the Bush administration, according to the centre's spokesperson, Steven Weiss.

The commission's recommendation for increased screening has also been questioned. Robert Whitaker, journalist and author of *Mad in America*, says that while increased screening "may seem defensible," it could also be seen as "fishing for customers," and that exorbitant spending on new drugs "robs from other forms of care such as job training and shelter programmes."

But Dr Graham Emslie, who helped develop the Texas project, defends screening: "There are good data showing that if you identify kids at an earlier age who are aggressive, you can intervene... and change their trajectory."

## Related Articles

### US teenager's parents sue school over depression screening test

Jeanne Lenzer

BMJ 2005 331: 714. [Extract] [Full Text]

### Bush unveils mental health action plan

Jeanne Lenzer

BMJ 2005 331: 592. [Extract] [Full Text]

### Bush's plan to screen for mental health meets opposition in Illinois

Jeanne Lenzer

BMJ 2004 329: 1065. [Extract] [Full Text]

### Bush launches controversial mental health plan

Jeanne Lenzer

BMJ 2004 329: 367. [Extract] [Full Text]

### Bush plans to screen whole US population for mental illness: Is road of initiative paved with good intentions?

Woody Caan

BMJ 2004 329: 292. [Extract] [Full Text]

### Bush plans to screen whole US population for mental illness: An unlikely public healthcare initiative

John R Broomfield

BMJ 2004 329: 292. [Extract] [Full Text]

### Bush plans to screen whole US population for mental illness: Bush's sanity test is revealed

Archie W Julien

BMJ 2004 329: 292. [Extract] [Full Text]

### Bush plans to screen whole US population for mental illness: Summary of responses

Birte Twisselmann

BMJ 2004 329: 292-293. [Extract] [Full Text]

**FDA's counsel accused of being too close to drug industry**

Jeanne Lenzer

BMJ 2004 329: 189. [Extract] [Full Text]

**Whistleblower charges medical oversight bureau with corruption**

Jeanne Lenzer

BMJ 2004 329: 69. [Extract] [Full Text]

**Whistleblower removed from job for talking to the press**

Jeanne Lenzer

BMJ 2004 328: 1153. [Extract] [Full Text]

**Rapid Responses:**

Read all Rapid Responses

**After this mass screening they are planning to use the lie-detector**

Dr. Herbert H. Nehrlich

bmj.com, 17 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**Welcome.**

Jim Sane

bmj.com, 18 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**A public health project worthy of massive public funding provided the aim is not to screen for "mental illnesses".**

Richard G Fiddian-Green

bmj.com, 20 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**Any other sources of information for the article?**

Richard M Diamond

bmj.com, 20 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**We must be crazy...**

Michael Ellner

bmj.com, 20 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**Paved with good intentions?**

Woody Caan

bmj.com, 20 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**Instruments for Screening and Treatment Modalities**

Eileen McGinn

bmj.com, 20 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**Ambitious yet commendable**

Prem K Kunjukrishnan, et al.

bmj.com, 20 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**Bush plans to screen whole US population for mental illness**

Raymond Gallup

bmj.com, 20 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**Bush's Sanity Test Revealed**

Dr. Archie W. Julien

bmj.com, 20 Jun 2004 [Full text]

### **WATCH OUT for Bush push of psychiatric drugs**

David W. Oaks

bmj.com, 20 Jun 2004 [Full text]

### **Brave new world?**

Blue Pilgrim

bmj.com, 20 Jun 2004 [Full text]

### **WE NEED A FORUM ?**

D.Michael VAN DE VEER, et al.

bmj.com, 20 Jun 2004 [Full text]

### **Implications of Government Sponsored Mental Health Screenings: Some Important Questions**

Barbara Rubin

bmj.com, 20 Jun 2004 [Full text]

### **Psychotic in Texas**

Mark Struthers

bmj.com, 20 Jun 2004 [Full text]

### **Awareness = Paranoia**

Darcy R Baston

bmj.com, 21 Jun 2004 [Full text]

### **Re: Bush's Sanity Test Revealed**

Dr. Naseem A. Qureshi

bmj.com, 21 Jun 2004 [Full text]

### **Goals of Screening?**

Judith A. Wills

bmj.com, 21 Jun 2004 [Full text]

### **Big Pharma Knows How to Create A Market**

Dr. Toby TYler Watson

bmj.com, 21 Jun 2004 [Full text]

### **Its the Bush cabal who need testing .. ASAP**

David Broatch

bmj.com, 21 Jun 2004 [Full text]

### **Sources for article**

Jeanne M. Lenzer

bmj.com, 21 Jun 2004 [Full text]

### **Bush Back on Clinton Agenda Again?**

Fritz E. Cluzen

bmj.com, 21 Jun 2004 [Full text]

### **From the perspective of a consumer**

Elaine H Menard

bmj.com, 22 Jun 2004 [Full text]

### **Delusional belief in your own intelligence?**

Sam Line

bmj.com, 22 Jun 2004 [Full text]

### **Please Bush don't do this it is wrong!**

Selma Junita (Janie) Lee, M.Ed.  
bmj.com, 25 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**Mental Health Begins at Home**

Carol Davidek-Waller  
bmj.com, 22 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**I think Mr.Bush ought to start with the White House and other governmental branches.**

AK Al-Sheikhli  
bmj.com, 22 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**Bush's Defense from an Autism Parent**

Lisa N. Neal, et al.  
bmj.com, 22 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**why would anyone trust bush?**

J T Temple  
bmj.com, 23 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**Long live the Nutty Professor**

Dr. Herbert H. Nehrlich  
bmj.com, 23 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**Does Kerry know this?**

Howard Minor  
bmj.com, 23 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**Re: Any other sources of information for the article?**

Helena Rocca  
bmj.com, 23 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**Weapons cartel to drug cartel: Bush administration's top trajectories.**

Dr. Naseem A. Qureshi, MD, IMAPA, LMIPS  
bmj.com, 24 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**Re: Long live the Nutty Professor**

John P Heptonstall  
bmj.com, 24 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**Fascism by any other name ?**

Dr. Herbert H. Nehrlich  
bmj.com, 24 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**An unlikely public healthcare initiative**

John R. Broomfield  
bmj.com, 24 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**Mens sana in corpore sano**

Dr. Herbert H. Nehrlich  
bmj.com, 25 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**In response to this initiative.**

Tim Lassiter  
bmj.com, 24 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**The first step in fighting the illness is admitting the problem**

Dr. Archie W. Julien  
bmj.com, 29 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**Bush's Psychopharmaceutic Inquisition**

Nathaniel .S. Lehrman. M.D.

bmj.com, 26 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**Good Sense can Prevail**

Louise Mclean

bmj.com, 26 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**Re: Re: Any other sources of information for the article?**

Sepp Hasslberger

bmj.com, 29 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**Bush Not Alone In Promoting Questionable Population-Based Health Screenings**

Laura Newman

bmj.com, 27 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**When screening can be more cost-effective for mental illness?**

Y Adi

bmj.com, 29 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**Screening & treatment for mental health: a society addicted to drugs?**

Giulio Formoso, et al.

bmj.com, 29 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**Mental Health Screening - and what will be next?**

Marilyn L. Zack

bmj.com, 29 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**At what cost...**

Jessica Epure

bmj.com, 30 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**Re: When screening can be more cost-effective for mental illness?**

David Horowitz

bmj.com, 30 Jun 2004 [Full text]

**Re: At what cost...**

Joan T McClusky

bmj.com, 2 Jul 2004 [Full text]

**Personal Perspective**

Monica Jackson

bmj.com, 5 Jul 2004 [Full text]

**Re: Re: When screening can be more cost-effective for mental illness?**

John R Sparkes

bmj.com, 6 Jul 2004 [Full text]

**Any way to prevent or limit this atrocity?**

lindsay geddes

bmj.com, 11 Jul 2004 [Full text]

**Re: WATCH OUT for Bush push of psychiatric drugs**

Kathleen (Katie) M. Hill

bmj.com, 11 Jul 2004 [Full text]

**Even ill intentions can have good results**

Michael F. Heilman, et al.

bmj.com, 12 Jul 2004 [Full text]

**Re: Even ill intentions can have good results**

John P Heptonstall

bmj.com, 12 Jul 2004 [Full text]

**Re: Even ill intentions can have good results**

Barbara R. Rubin

bmj.com, 13 Jul 2004 [Full text]

**Identifying Americans in need of mental-health screenings**

Michael J Reynolds

bmj.com, 14 Jul 2004 [Full text]

**Re: Re: Even ill intentions can have good results**

MC Feliciello

bmj.com, 14 Jul 2004 [Full text]

**A development of real concern...**

Charly Groenendijk

bmj.com, 19 Jul 2004 [Full text]

**It is happening now**

Allen L. Jones, et al.

bmj.com, 24 Jul 2004 [Full text]

**Mothers need gentle birth and nutrition, not drugs!!!**

Jenny M Hatch

bmj.com, 25 Jul 2004 [Full text]

**Mr Bush's plan is not good.**

David N. Andrews

bmj.com, 26 Jul 2004 [Full text]

**Medication for Mental Illness - Cure or Cause?**

Debby Painter

bmj.com, 30 Jul 2004 [Full text]

**Begging the Question of Mental "Illness"**

F. Breckenridge McKinley

bmj.com, 30 Jul 2004 [Full text]

**BUSH PLANS TO SCREEN WHOLE U.S. POPULATION FOR MENTAL ILLNESS**

Hayley H Szeto

bmj.com, 1 Aug 2004 [Full text]

**Alarming but FALSE Headline**

Sarah A Koch

bmj.com, 11 Aug 2004 [Full text]

**Don't worry, be happy !**

Dr. Herbert H. Nehrlich

bmj.com, 12 Aug 2004 [Full text]

**Re: Awareness = Paranoia**

Mary Powers, et al.

bmj.com, 31 Aug 2004 [Full text]

**The American Psychiatric Association worked to suppress dissemination of this report**

Denise D Dewald

bmj.com, 8 Sep 2004 [Full text]

**Bush's mental health screening**

Bethany A Kreyssig

bmj.com, 12 Nov 2004 [Full text]

**Re: Any other sources of information for the article?**

melissa d martinez

bmj.com, 26 Nov 2004 [Full text]

**Re: It is happening now**

Brenda Durant

bmj.com, 28 Nov 2004 [Full text]

**Re: Bush plans to screen whole US population for mental illness**

Lauren J Sullivan

bmj.com, 2 Jan 2005 [Full text]

**Nationwide Screening for Teens Already in Place**

Susan Weibert

bmj.com, 28 Jan 2005 [Full text]

---

[About BMJ](#) - [Privacy policy](#) - [Web site terms & conditions](#) - [Site map](#)  
[HighWire Press](#) - [Feedback](#) - [Help](#) - © 2004 BMJ Publishing Group Ltd.