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## Did Seroquel Cause Veteran's Death?

September 5, 2010, 06:00:00AM. By [Heidi Turner](#)

Washington, DC: Families of soldiers and veterans who have died while taking [Seroquel](#) have requested an investigation, citing concerns that the antipsychotic medication may have caused their loved ones' deaths.

The *Associated Press* (AP) reported on 8/30/10 that Andrew White returned from a tour of duty in Iraq showing signs of [post-traumatic stress disorder](#), including insomnia, nightmares and restlessness. Doctors prescribed ever-increasing doses of Seroquel, but the medication failed to stop White's nightmares. AP noted that at one point, White's prescription was more than double the maximum dose for schizophrenia patients.



[White died in his sleep](#) at the age of 23.

Although Seroquel has been linked to several deaths, it has not been proven to have caused the deaths or even contributed to them. According to a Veterans Affairs investigation of White's death, White died from a drug interaction; at the time of his death he was also reportedly taking an antidepressant, anti-anxiety pill and a painkiller that he obtained without a prescription.

Seroquel is approved for the treatment of schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and depression. It is used off-label for insomnia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, general anxiety disorders and depressive episodes associated with bipolar disorder. Although it is not illegal to prescribe medications off-label, it is illegal

for companies to market drugs for off-label uses. AstraZeneca, maker of Seroquel, agreed to pay \$520 million earlier this year to settle allegations that the drug maker's salespeople pitched Seroquel for off-label use.

*The New York Times* (04/27/10) reports AstraZeneca was accused of promoting Seroquel for off-label uses for children, the elderly, veterans and prisoners. The company was also accused of misleading doctors by highlighting favorable research and not disclosing studies that suggested negative findings, such as those linking Seroquel to an increased risk of diabetes.

AstraZeneca released a statement denying the allegations.

Side effects include involuntary muscle spasms (known as tardive dyskinesia), weight gain, diabetes and hyperglycemia. Seroquel now carries a black box warning about the risk of diabetes and the risk of death related to dementia in elderly people.

Meanwhile, a judge has given AstraZeneca Plc more time to settle 6,000 lawsuits that claimed Seroquel caused patients to develop diabetes, according to *Bloomberg* on 9/01/10. In August 2010, the company announced it would pay approximately \$200 million to settle more than 17,000 lawsuits regarding Seroquel. Each plaintiff would receive approximately \$11,000 in the settlement.