Do psychiatric drugs do more harm than good to treat mental illness?

In the book [Anatomy of an Epidemic: Magic Bullets, Psychiatric Drugs and the Astonishing Rise of Mental Illness in America], which I review here, award-winning journalist Robert Whitaker presents evidence that medications for mental illness, over time and in the aggregate, cause net harm.

…

[John] Horgan: When and why did you start reporting on mental health?
Whitaker: …My understanding was that researchers were making great advances in understanding mental disorders, and that they had found that schizophrenia and depression were due to chemical imbalances in the brain, which psychiatric medications then put back in balance.

…

First, there were two studies by the World Health Organization that found that longer-term outcomes for schizophrenia patients in three "developing" countries were much better than in the U.S. and five other "developed" countries. This didn't really make sense to me, and then I read this: in the developing countries, they used antipsychotic drugs acutely, but not chronically. Only 16 percent of patients in the developing countries were regularly maintained on antipsychotics.

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Those studies led to my questioning the story that our society told about those we call "mad," and I got a book contract to dig into that question. That project turned into Mad in America, which told of the history of our society's treatment of the seriously mentally ill, from colonial times until today—a history marked by bad science and societal mistreatment of those so diagnosed.

[Find Anatomy of an Epidemic: Magic Bullets, Psychiatric Drugs and the Astonishing Rise of Mental Illness in America on Amazon.]

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