

## PE1651/G

Professor John Read submission of 5 June 2017

My submission regarding the petition on antidepressants takes the form of the abstract of one of my research papers, published in a leading scientific journal, describing the results of the largest survey of antidepressants undertaken to date:

READ, J., CARTWRIGHT, C., GIBSON, K. (2014). Adverse emotional and interpersonal effects reported by 1,829 New Zealanders while taking antidepressants. *Psychiatry Research* 216, 67-73: [http://www.psychiatryjournal.com/article/S0165-1781\(14\)00083-3/pdf](http://www.psychiatryjournal.com/article/S0165-1781(14)00083-3/pdf)

**Background:** In the context of rapidly increasing antidepressant use internationally, and recent reviews raising concerns about efficacy and adverse effects, this study aimed to survey the lived experience of the largest sample of AD recipients to date.

**Methods:** An online questionnaire about experiences with, and beliefs about, antidepressants was completed by 1829 adults who had been prescribed antidepressants in the last five years (53% were first prescribed them between 2000 and 2009, and 52% reported taking them for more than three years).

**Results:** Eight of the 20 adverse effects studied were reported by over half the participants; most frequently Sexual Difficulties (62%) and Feeling Emotionally Numb (60%). Percentages for other effects included: Feeling Not Like Myself - 52%, Reduction In Positive Feelings - 42%, Caring Less About Others - 39%, Suicidality - 39% and Withdrawal Effects - 55%. Total Adverse Effect scores were related to younger age, lower education and income, and type of antidepressant, but not to level of depression prior to taking antidepressants.

**Conclusions:** The adverse effects of antidepressants may be more frequent than previously reported, and include emotional and interpersonal effects.

The article is relevant to the petition because it documents the frequency of adverse effects, particularly the fact that 55% experience withdrawal effects when they try to stop. Thus people need help when coming off these drugs. Many try and fail to come off, because of the withdrawal symptoms, and are then stuck with all the other adverse effects.