

PE1651/DDD

Diana Hanley submission of 11 January 2018

I was prescribed antidepressants from the age of 15, initially for anorexia from which I recovered with family support. By the time I had recovered from the anorexia I had become physiologically dependent on antidepressant drugs and remained on antidepressant drugs for fifty five years, as prescribed. Simultaneously I was prescribed benzodiazepines. The whole time I was on this medication I experienced terrible side effects. Taking the medication was far worse than the anorexia, and actually caused increasingly serious health problems even though I continued to take the medication as prescribed. I was severely disabled both physically and mentally and could scarcely look after myself let alone my only child. I had no family support and my doctors disbelieved my symptoms and the fact that the medication had changed my personality, to include such traits such as disinhibition, which was totally uncharacteristic to me. I also suffered the paradoxical effects of use of these drugs, when the drugs in question have the opposite effect to that which is intended; in my case, with increasing chemically induced anxiety, depression, memory loss, cognitive impairment, balance issues, blood pressure problems, severe G.I. difficulties, and a myriad of other central system impairments.

Even GPs do not understand the word TOLERANCE which means that unless you keep increasing the dosage you are in a permanent state of withdrawal. My body and mind suffered excruciatingly because of this. I did work part-time almost my entire adult life but it was excruciatingly difficult. I had never been able to learn to drive because of the side effects of the medication. This massively impinged on my income and capacity to earn, my ability to cope day to day, especially, as a single parent disabled by prescribed medication, when it came to bringing up daughter. I was trapped by the prescribed medication at home alone with my daughter and physically incapacitated, unable to fulfil basic tasks

The medication made me so soporific that I was unable to see my own situation with any clarity, let alone self-advocate.

I was beset by chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia as well as all the other symptoms of withdrawal as a result of the medication. I also suffered severe memory problems which exacerbated the helplessness of my situation. All these symptoms are known side effects of prolonged use of this type of medication. Since discontinuation of both anti-depressants and benzodiazepines, and despite the horrific withdrawal syndrome (including protracted withdrawal which continues to this day) I have been able to live a much more normal life.

I feel robbed of my entire adult life and now at the age of seventy three, I'm trying to look forward to a peaceful and uncomplicated old age.

I wholeheartedly support this petition so future generations do not have to suffer the same fate. Especially these days when so much is known about alternative strategies to stress related problems.

Anorexia did not destroy my life, the medication did.