

PE1651/GG

Submission of 7 January 2018

I'm a 37 year old IT professional from Dublin Ireland. I would like to describe my experience with a prescription of antidepressants it's aftermath.

In March 2015 I went to my company doctor in Ireland with work stress. I did not meet the ICD-10 criteria for a depression at all. I had no problems getting out of bed, was not suicidal had no increase or decrease in appetite. I was just stressed and not sleeping enough due to long hours at full time work and in my part time studies.

My doctor, in a 5 minute consultation and without explaining anything, handed me a prescription for Venlafaxine.

Venlafaxine is a third choice antidepressant that is normally prescribed for treatment resistant depression. It was the first antidepressant I ever took.

The pharmacy filled the prescription of 10 pills without explanation and without handing out the patient information leaflet.

I took this medication for 5 days and got several dangerous side effects, one of them severe bleeding. Aside from that agitation, insomnia, paranoia and more.

After 5 days of horrendous side effects, I stopped the medication according to the doctor's instructions. Aside from feeling hungover, I was completely fine for a day. Until after about 36 hours the withdrawal symptoms set in.

I suffered convulsions, myoclonus, urges to commit suicide, rapid mood swings, aggression, crying, sweating so much that we had to change the bedsheets 5 times per night, involuntary movements, tremors, passing out, vertigo, dizziness, arrhythmia, chest pain, vomiting, severe suicidal depression, paranoia, anxiety, electric shocks in the brain, disorientation, cognitive problems, memory loss, concentration problems. The list goes on and on. I had over 70 different, disabling symptoms.

I got no help from my doctors. Due to the extreme involuntary movements, my neurologists diagnosed me with a "functional movement disorder", migraines, and chronic fatigue syndrome. I had none of these issues before taking and stopping the Venlafaxine.

I was off work for 2.5 years due to these symptoms. To this day I still suffer severe symptoms. I had to return to work because I can not afford to have no income. Disability payments were denied because a "Functional Movement Disorder" is, in the views of the neurologists, not enough grounds to be off work. They ignored the other symptoms I have and generally disbelieved me.

I am at work now, trying to survive every day without getting fired. I have to leave meetings often because I get seizure-like episodes. I forget simple instructions and have to sleep often during the workday.

The drugs have completely eradicated the ability to feel any positive emotion. They have practically made me inhuman, only able to feel negative emotions or numbness. I feel disconnected from the few friends I have left after being “mysteriously” sick for years.

Before, I was always an overperformer at work, I had many friends, I was a person other people enjoyed to be around. Now I’m a shell of my former self, constantly in agony, electric shocks shaking my brain every couple of minutes, feeling numb and disconnected.

I feel let down by the medical profession who poisoned me, denied the harm they caused and refused to give me any help or support.

I want to also tell the story of my friend John, who lived in my city. We met weekly to catch up on our progress and our symptoms. He had been given a prescription of Venlafaxine and Diazepam under similar circumstances than me. The drugs made him worse so he was trying to get off. He committed suicide in the process because the withdrawal symptoms became unbearable for him. He left behind a grieving family who doesn’t understand what happened.

I urge the Scottish parliament to be the first government to take action in this matter. Please hold the medical establishment and the drug industry accountable for the harm they cause to patients and social security systems.

Please kick off an investigation into the withdrawal and long term effects of antidepressants. I know many people who are getting worse and worse since they are taking antidepressants. They are not realising that the drugs might be causing their decline.

Antidepressants are psychoactive substances, just like alcohol or other drugs. They might be helpful for symptoms of depression in some people but at what long term cost? Clinical studies for antidepressants have been only short term studies. They have barely shown any positive effect. What would be the outcome if long term studies were conducted?

Please, I urge you: Help us to get recognition of the harm that was caused to us and prevent further people from being prescribed these drugs without informed consent.