

PE1651/QQQ

Loretta Sanders submission of 11 January 2018

I was driving in my car yesterday listening to the Jeremy Vine show with Dr Sarah Jarvis discussing opioid medications and the seriousness of their over prescription causing addiction in many people. I was pleased to hear Dr Jarvis talk of their addictive qualities and admit drugs like tramadol were causing serious addiction problems in many people. However, I would have liked the discussion to also address the responsibility of the medical profession for prescribing these medications without acknowledging the impact that they can have. And herein lies my issue. We know it is essential for a patient to trust their doctor; it has even been shown that that trust is an essential part of the healing process. The contributors to the programme and many of us on the support group social media pages are left without trust and feel it is essential to expose the pharmaceutical companies for not identifying these serious issues and promoting dangerous and evil drugs under the name MEDICATION!

Dr Jarvis then talked about how the newer drugs: gabapentin and pregabalin which were being prescribed for the nerve pain to replace the opioid medications were now also known to be addictive. I was on pregabalin for over 4 years but intuitively realised I should stay on a low dose and thankfully never went above 250... the drug is horrible to get off and I am now free of it after one year though it contributes still to symptoms of protracted withdrawal

My story started with antidepressants which I was prescribed for 18 years including seroxat, venlafaxine and escitalopram. I was NEVER ADVISED of their addictive or potential harmful side effects. Yes we know they are not addictive in the same way as opioids and benzodiazepines but they impact on the brain structure and on the nervous system and cause the body to be unable to cope in many people if prescribed for many years. There are many scholarly articles to this effect. Whilst on them I had a great deal of depersonalisation symptoms and coming off gave me brain zaps. I was a child of the 60's with alcoholic and co-dependent behaviour, much of my experience was filled with trauma. This was the reason I was put on the medication. At different times I was offered lithium for possible bipolar 2 but I didn't take it. I was still convinced that they were keeping me in a stable condition until venlafaxine had an extreme effect nearly causing me to be an alcoholic and engage in risky behaviour SO VERY MUCH OUT OF CHARACTER. I didn't like what they were doing to my personality or my physical health and I started to cut down

I chose to come off these drugs six years ago and then when the withdrawal was so bad I took two escitalopram and got serotonin syndrome. I was hospitalised for a month with suicidal agitated depression I HAD NEVER HAD THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE IN MY LIFE PRIOR TO THIS. I now know reinstating medication can cause neurotoxicity

During my stay in hospital my psychiatrist prescribed high doses of quetiapine, mirtazapine, propranolol, zopiclone and lorazepam and when he wanted to add duloxetine into the mix I discharged myself a very sick woman and it has taken six years to get my life and health back on track though I still have a long way to go. I have lost a good friend I

was in hospital with to suicide and others are unable to work and their lives are ruined. I had to go part time after two bouts of absence both lasting six months.

I now have a diagnosis of Medically Unexplained Symptoms from the NHS. I work with alternative health practitioners who are helping me to restore my health but much of my wellbeing is down to support groups like "Protracted Withdrawal", Adverse Drug Reactions" and Let's Talk Withdrawal" and others. In these group one can find scholarly articles, advice on nutrition and a range of supportive protocols like meditation and neural rewiring plus therapies like Emotional Freedom Technique and Bowen therapy which support the body to heal.

One of the worst aspects of this whole experience has been the loss of trust in the medical profession. IT HAS BEEN SHOCKING to read people's stories which have validated my own. I have to ask the question: "Is the NHS in the talons of the pharmaceutical companies?" I asked my GP to refer me to a geneticist as I felt all the years on antidepressants had triggered a gene expression. Her response was she wouldn't give me the MTHFR test but was prepared to treat my symptoms with pharmaceuticals. She told me the NHS was about symptom treatment and not about cause !!!!!

To sum up the NHS needs to look at different models for wellbeing, different protocols, nutrition and social engagement to promote positive mental health. They also need to listen to people like us, those who have experienced protracted withdrawal and people like Dr Healy who are knowledgeable about such things and not bury this away like a dirty little secret!

As there was nothing for me I started my own choir MEAOWS mindful emotions and optimal wellbeing singers. I did this because I was offered an NHS community group When I left hospital which was so under resourced and so ineffectual, it made me feel even worse. My choir meets once a week but all the people who come are made to feel connected with meet ups and get together at other times. I am on a half dose of Mirtazapine a horrible drug almost impossible for some people to get off. I have asked for liquid form as this is easier but I have been denied it due to funding. Whilst I am on any pharma medication I am putting my health at risk, this is known as epigenetics . Gene mutations express when environmental conditions enable them to. I now have fibromyalgia, gut health issues, migraines and I will only treat with diet, yoga and other protocols which keep me free from pharmaceutical medications. My faith in the NHS is gone and so to is the trust in doctors who do not listen to their patients, preferring to listen to pharma company reps.