

## **PE1651/CCCCC**

Anonymous submission of 7 February 2018

Here is a summary of my experiences with psychiatric drugs over the last 18 years.

2000 - Initially prescribed Citalopram 20mg by GP during death of my father

2013 - first serious attempt at withdrawal due to debilitating side effects and a general sense of well being following years of therapy

2013 - 2018 - 5 years of stopping and starting various meds (following medical advice) - emotional and physical chaos ensues.

Now - tapering Venlafaxine, so far over 9 months at a pace far slower than recommended by psychiatrist whilst continuing to take 125mg of Lamotrigine to be tapered at a future date.

Problems when taking SSRIs:

Sexual Dysfunction

Emotional numbing

Emotional instability

Cognitive impairment (concentration, slowed thinking, greatly reduced 'creative' mind)

Weight Gain

General feeling of low mood after a number of years of use

Sense of detachment from life and myself

Inability to experience a spiritual dimension to life

Problems in getting off SSRIs:

Hypervigilance (extreme 4 months after stopping leading to hospitalisation)

Hypersensitivity to noise and light

Anxiety/fear/anger

Akathasia

Insomnia (4 hours max per night, early morning waking, constantly exhausted)

Normal life problems trigger very stressful reactions

Emotional instability

GI problems

Reduced/fluctuating appetite

Nausea

Effects on my life due to withdrawal:

I lost my 'health' some time ago (I'm 42 now)

Nearly lost a marriage after it had barely got started.

Had to reduce work and cut income more than 1/2 and remaining work is difficult

I have to time limit all my activities to avoid overwhelm - for example, going shopping is hard but gets impossible after 15 mins.

I've become withdrawn and therefore social life has been affected significantly

My thoughts:

Whilst on and trying to get off these meds (mainly SSRIs) I've experienced Incredible denial and confusion amongst GPs and psychiatrists. At the point where 4 different psychiatrists gave me 4 different diagnosis's and prescriptions in the same month this became very clear. You're essentially on your own on this journey, and no, your friends and family probably won't understand.

The physical and psychological effects of SSRI withdrawal are far worse than cocaine, alcohol and cigarettes. I say this from ample experience. The 'protracted' bit makes it especially tortuous.

I suspect that SSRIs have some beneficial effects in short term use, but the physical dependancy and resulting suffering during withdrawal after chronic use is quite incredible. I don't see this situation improving quickly - to solve any problem you need to first admit it exists. Psychiatry can't do this because it would be at risk of imploding and there is far too much money and pride at stake for that to happen. I think the only way this will change is with education at a personal level and political action such as this. I consider myself lucky as I am well educated and have a hunger for getting to the truth, therefore I am able to navigate this mine field with at least some ammunition. I know many others who are not so lucky and are at the mercy of their prescribing physician.

hope that helps and thanks for the important work that you are doing here,