

PE1651/FFFF

Anonymous submission of 12 January 2018

In 2000 I experienced pains in my wrist and arm from keyboard overuse in my job at work. I presented to my doctor for a prognosis. I want to make it clear that at this point in time I had never experienced any kind of psychological distress neither was I emotional. The doctor told me that I had a pain in my arm because I had a chemical imbalance and that I needed to take a series of medicines until I found the right one for me. Having never smoked drunk or taken any kind of drug legal or illegal before I asked if these were addictive I was told no they weren't. I asked if they had any side effects. I was simply told maybe you might experience a dry mouth. I did not know that these drugs were used for psychiatric purposes. I was given a sequence of drugs to take to heal my repetitive strain injury in my hand, amitriptyline, nortriptyline, venlafaxine, and clonazepam. I worked my way through these medicines over several months finding they were no use and then quit them. Several months later I start to experience uncharacteristic emotional manifestations. I started to experience unusual crying spells and had what I would describe as my first ever kind of panic attack. I didn't even know what a panic attack was. I presented back to my doctor and said that there was something wrong with me but I don't know what it is. I was immediately given a prescription for paroxetine assured it was not addictive and no side-effects, there was no clinical assessment done of any kind. I cannot for the life of me understand how it came about but I stayed on this drug with several failed attempts to quit it until January 2010. The doctor just simply kept renewing scripts all of this time. No discussion was ever had on getting off this drug. In January 2010 I told him I want off and was told "okay just take as much paroxetine as you like ". In other words just cold turkey it. I knew this was not correct and left frustrated yet determined to break free of this so-called medicine.

After a nine-month self calculated taper I was in a very dark dark place and presented reluctantly back to the doctor to get answers for what I now know was horrific withdrawal symptoms. The doctor seemed unaware of withdrawal symptoms (or didn't want to know) with coming off paroxetine. On trying to describe these symptoms was told I had an underlying depression. I had never used that word before and replied that is not correct. I was referred to a psychiatrist. The first thing I said to the psychiatrist was, "are you aware of any issues with people coming off paroxetine". This was his reply, "if there were issues with people coming off paroxetine people would be suing the drug companies". I interpreted this as no there were no issues with people coming off paroxetine so the problem must be myself. My inner conviction told me this was not correct also.

I left determined right then and there not to engage with the medical profession again. I was on my own.

The next few years were the most difficult of my life. The mornings were pure hell. Forget trying to hold down a job each day was a struggle just to survive. Uncontrollable restlessness uncontrollable psychological and emotional distress, sobbing and suicidal ideations were the norm daily for the next few years. I would be the last person in the world to commit suicide yet I consider it a miracle that I'm still alive.

It wasn't until in my 7th year of being drug-free that I was able to return to work on a part-time basis. I was unable to pursue my sports passions during this time also. I used to be a top level amateur badminton player. I'm now in my eighth year of being drug-free and trying to pick up the pieces and get on with my life. I'm unable to sleep with any regularity am seriously sexually damaged and my beautifully trained tenor opera voice has been taken from me. I now find it very difficult to sing and extremely tiring when I try. So much so that I have completely given up this prior passion. It has been stolen from me.

I have a very deep sense of being hoodwinked and betrayed by the medical profession. I'm also outraged and heartbroken that I can now see in hindsight that I was made a drug addict by stealth trapped in a mind numbing anosognosic kafkaesque world for almost a decade!!

It is totally unacceptable to me that SSRI drugs are being prescribed, they should be banned.

It is totally unacceptable to me that doctors do not acknowledge withdrawal symptoms off these drugs which for some people like myself can last for years. Any attempt to get answers for the withdrawal trauma results in intelligence insulting labels and comments from doctors.

Doctors should be deeply ashamed at their stupidity. And of the life altering harm they are doing to innocent trusting people.