

PE1651/CCCC

Joanne Elson submission of 14 January 2018

As a U.K. Citizen I was first prescribed diazepam in February 2005 after what I thought was a severe nervous breakdown. What I now know it was a severe reaction to the SSRI anti-depressant Citalopram which was prescribed for anxiety at 20 mg. I was told the drug may make me worse before better as I endured horrific symptoms in the first few weeks of taking. What resulted was acute anxiety & panic attacks that I can only compare to a cold turkey state like I've experienced coming off diazepam .. the doctors immediately prescribed Stelazine which put me in an almost weird seizure for seven hours & then I was switched to diazepam ... it worked instantly & my symptoms lessened but I still was on the horrific Citalopram which they realised after three months was not agreeing with me. By this time I was dependant on diazepam and when I tried to stop after being put on an antipsychotic for two months, it wasn't long before severe withdrawal symptoms came through.

I had to go back on the Diazepam & stayed on for many years, mental health specialists failed terribly with withdrawal attempts & it wasn't until September 2012 I finally hit tolerance withdrawal & was prescribed Mirtazpine 30mg & upped the diazepam doseage until I reached stability. I wasn't depressed, my nervous system was just going mental after a stressful year of moving home & an incompetent CBT therapist was trying to reduce my dose over the previous 6 months. I stabilised well but needed more Mirtazpine by Xmas as I'd stopped sleeping. Stabilised well & got myself back down to 8mg of diazepam where I stayed then with no medical support for two years, ordering diazepam on repeat prescriptions as an when I needed it, some days I took more depending on what was going on. By May 2013 I hit tolerance of my 8mg again & went off my feet.

From then on I was never able to go into shops & spent less and less time going out as my body just couldn't cope with people & exertion. I got very breathless walking anywhere & standing for long periods of time was impossible... I developed health anxiety & avoided the doctors. I still managed to function but never went anywhere that involved too much walking or standing. I just got very anxious & panicky. There were occasions I upped my dose so I could go to places, but part of me knew this wasn't good. I was barely on above 8mg for majority of the 10 years before my 1st GP taper began in July 2015. My first taper controlled by my GP was rushed by Xmas 2016 I was down to 2mg of diazepam not feeling great but still quite functional.. I had a tough time at Christmas & my cuts all caught up with my fragile nervous system ... I tried to reason with my GP who stopped all diazepam in January 2016 when I had to updose to 4mg to get stability again. He just refused anymore prescriptions & said my taper was a 6 month non negotiable plan. I was Cold Turkey from 4mg diazepam & left for 13 days in a hell I can't even remember it was that bad. Somehow I was able to walk into a drug substance misuse clinic because I'd bought some off the streets and threatened to take them, I was too scared to and luckily they reinstated me at 10mg diazepam ... my current GP I struck off and found out he'd put I was allergic to Benzodiazepines on my file with hope no other doctor would prescribe me. It's still on there and I've left it so I can show how corrupt he was.

I took 10 weeks to stabilise & then the substance team encouraged me to find another GP local to me to save the long travelling to the clinic. I managed to find another & now I was terrified of doctors because of my previous experiences. He said he would prescribe me but he wanted 10% non negotiable cuts each month. I had to agree. I was doing well yet again & got down to 5mg by Xmas 2016, I felt pressured by the doc to reach my targets.

By January 2016 my body went into a meltdown yet again, instead of up dosing I tried to ride it through but things got so bad I had to go up & up until 15mg. This time there was a very brief respite in symptoms. It soon became apparent no matter how much I up dosed I wasn't going to stabilise & get functional ... it never really happened. So I started to cut again very slowly. For the last 10 months I've been bedridden with high blood pressure & elevated heart rate & have to take meds for this.

The meds don't really help & I can no longer function at all. I can't drive, cook, stand, walk & on a good day I can just about get up & go down to my couch & back up to bed. I've 24/7 pressure in my chest & my breathing is bad. My heart rate is all over the place & although slowed by propranolol I can still feel the meds struggling to control it. I can't do anything with my 8 year old. I've not attended anything at school this year & I've had to employ a child minder to see to her school needs. I can't clean so I pay a cleaner & my partner goes out to work & leaves me bedridden on my own with plates of food by my bed to last for the day.

I am scared to use the bathroom as it sets off panic & I can't breathe & I daren't move around my house unaided ... I live in a constant state of fear & I have other Health issues now including my thyroid & bladder spasms, fluid retention, acute sensitivity to everything, foods, people, sounds. I can't shower or take care of myself. I've got infections & sores from not showering & I'm physically in a bad way. Sometimes eating causes panic attacks & if I can't breathe properly I can't physically move from the bed. I get adrenaline surges all the time & I can't process or remember anything.

I can write a large post, but it will knock me out later or catch up with me tomorrow because of sensory overload. Everything affects my nervous system & my whole quality of life is very poor. I have depression, mood swings & so many other symptoms right now I'm just a bedridden mess & I need you to come out and interview and watch me live day to day in this state so they can uncover what medical professionals are causing because of their ignorance. This is a medical crisis & it needs exposing ... my doctor doesn't check on me & I'm left to withdraw under a mental health nurse who says I shouldn't really be under her because this is a physical dependence, nobody wants to know & I took this medication as prescribed.

Why are we left to suffer yet heroin addicts & alcoholics get all the support they need. It's truly horrific & terrifying what I'm experiencing & I want the whole world to know what these drugs do. I'm physically damaged & mentally impaired. I was once a qualified primary school teacher ... now I am suffering intolerable symptoms through Benzodiazepine Withdrawal Syndrome... I'm down to 9mg from 15mg on my 3rd taper & I'm very unwell.

It's going to be a very long road off & another long road to recovery, then I have more evil medications to come off. I don't know how much longer I can endure this level of suffering. It has to be put out there what these drugs are doing & how our doctors & other medical experts are just ignorant to the dangers of these drugs & in total denial that a withdrawal Syndrome exists. My doctor says I have anxiety? Really? Well it's pretty bad anxiety to have someone bedridden for 10 months. I don't know how I'm going to survive this! I can only pray that I do. Right now I just feel like I am dying every day.