

PE1651/EEE

Anonymous submission of 11 January 2018

I'd like to submit my experience of psychiatric medication as this is an area in desperate need of reform which physicians aren't taking seriously. I'd like, however, to remain anonymous.

Despite NICE guidelines saying non-medication treatments should be the first line for any diagnosis I've ever had (depression, anxiety, PTSD), the over-reliance on drugs seems to prevail, with them offered first/instead, of more meaningful options (which could/should include recognition of social factors giving rise to adverse mental health).

I've ended up being addicted to, and then forced to withdraw without support, from Venlafaxine, Zopiclone, and Lorazepam, the latter of the 2 prescribed at doses and for periods longer than is allowed by NICE guidelines.

Venlafaxine: I was NEVER told of any risks of addiction to Venlafaxine, nor of any problems from withdrawal. In fact, failures in regular prescribing (eg because the doctor had forgotten to sign the prescription, or written up the wrong thing) has meant that I've had to undergo cold-turkey withdrawals when my meds have run out, with disastrous effect because they've led to psychotic episodes where I -and others- were at risk of lethal harm. When I'd subsequently seen a doctor, they'd always pretended like the side effects I was reporting were irrelevant (perhaps to minimise liability, perhaps because of genuine ignorance?). I ended up getting to a point where after repeated failures to maintain unbroken access to this dangerous drug that I gave up on the doctors and refused to take it again, but it's literally taken years to shake off brain zaps, and I still have periods where I stop being able to think properly.

Zopiclone/Lorazepam: Doctors are well aware of the risks of addiction of these drugs, but because they still rely on medication for treatment, they simply find ways around rules designed to maintain patient wellbeing. In particular, psychiatrists responsible for devising the care package will simply write a letter to the GP asking that they prescribe these drugs; in doing so passing off responsibility for the treatment, and 'ignoring' (by failing to revisit instructions/treatment plans) that their letters are for a dosage which is applicable for only a few days but are deliberately left ambiguous so they are being enacted at very high dosages years later. GPs, who have little alternative than to act on what a 'specialist' has devised, and pretending to themselves that it's part of a wider treatment package, will do so, but in a way which means there is no care, and the cost of treatment is high for the patient. Financially; GPs giving weekly scripts for 2 medications meant the cost was huge- I was forced to get a prescription prepayment card thing, and at a point where I couldn't afford to renew this, was forced to give up this medication (again, cold turkey). The other costs were greater still; I'm pretty sure that they actually had the effect of maintaining the worst symptoms of my PTSD (it's taken 3 years after having stopped for the nightmares and flashbacks to lessen up, having been maintained at a really acute level unabated for the years I was on these drugs), and I still get confused/overwhelmed easily, meaning I simply can't live a normal life (let alone

have friends, go out, or work). There are very long tapers meant to be applied for withdrawing from these drugs, but it would have meant trying to pay for additional prescriptions for a further year and a half of a managed withdrawal, which I couldn't afford, and having been informed of this (as well as being aware of the consequences of not following it), my GP simply didn't follow up; having formerly having had to speak to me each week for prescribing, they haven't even bothered to speak to me for just over a year (even though they had been instructed by a clinical psychologist to speak to a commissioner about finding alternative treatment.)

Doctors -especially those in mental healthcare- refuse to accept their treatment has any adverse effect; this needs to change! Treating people as biological vessels in which to drop some 'magic' potions ignores us as people, the causes of our illnesses, or the real consequences of those potions. It seems like the treatment pathways aren't properly described so doctors -who seem to only want easy checklists/answers- just find a way for the easy answers (drugs) to be used, even if they need to find ways around the drugs rules. The whole experience of how my mental healthcare has been treated has left me reluctant to have ANYTHING to do with doctors- I'm a walking timebomb of medical problems, and not only is this causing me pain and likely making my health worse, when I am finally forced to seek treatment when it gets so bad, it will be MUCH more difficult and expensive for the problems to be sorted out.