

## **PE1651/JJ**

SA Jul0 submission of 26 December 2017

I was on Prozac 20 mgs for a little over 20 yrs. I was told by a psychiatrist I would need to take Prozac for life due to a chemical imbalance. When my mothers health declined rapidly I was switched to Venlafaxine (Effexor) being told that Prozac was no longer working.

I had MANY debilitating side effects that my psychiatrist said had nothing to do with Venlafaxine. I didn't find this out until I missed taking 1 Venlafaxine 150 mg capsule and couldn't walk without hanging on to furniture and walls. That's when I looked up Venlafaxine side effects and was shocked to see all my side effects for a solid year (1 year) that I was seeing specialist for were related to Venlafaxine. I was LIVID! Last week of March 2013, I told my psychiatrist to put me back on Prozac. She bridged me reducing Venlafaxine 50% for 2 weeks and adding Prozac 20-40 mgs for 2 weeks.

The first day of reducing my Venlafaxine from 150-75 mgs were PURE HELL! I was naive and didn't know anything about withdrawals, no one told me anything. My psychiatrist just told me to go to the ER where they told me I was going through withdrawals from Venlafaxine and sent me home like it was nothing. The ER doctor told me to stay hydrated and crawl in bed. I was shocked that they let me get behind the wheel of a vehicle! I found myself driving on the wrong side of the road driving home when I saw cars driving towards me. When I told my psych doctor I couldn't drive she told me if I didn't go to the ER she wouldn't write me a note for work.

I came home and crawled in bed still reducing my Venlafaxine as told by my psych doctor. I wouldn't wish this on any living being. I had uncontrollable and severe shivering, jerking, sweating, hallucinations and blurred vision, vomiting, diarrhea, dizziness, brain zaps, heart palpitations and racing heart, body wreaked with burning pain, felt like bugs crawling underneath my skin, vivid nightmares, my brain wouldn't work to even form a thought (COMPLETELY disconnected with body and earth), the only thing I could do was endure this hell staring at the wall in front of me. If I closed my eyes I had white dots coming at me. I had a vision like I was there....I was in a crowd of people right after Jesus had been hung on the cross. It felt like my brain and body was shutting down. If I was able to think (form a thought) I would have ended my life and suffering in an INSTANT without as second thought. This has been the most cruel, mental and physical torture anyone can endure. I went through this alone, bedridden, rarely ate because I couldn't get out of bed, when I did it was SO HARD to nibble on crackers, fix a piece of toast, cereal or microwave soup to eat and everything I ate I either vomited or it went right through me.

After going through hell withdrawals I knew nothing about I had a long list of symptoms and was suicidal. Psych doctors kept trying me on multiple drugs (1-4 at a time) only to make me worse for the next 6 months. I finally told my psych doctor that I would only take Paxil 20 mgs (I just picked 1) and see what happens since NOTHING is working. Paxil didn't work either but I was desperate and felt like I needed something but didn't know how to fix myself and doctors didn't either.

I lost my job, family, friends and would've been homeless if it wasn't for my savings

over the years. Out of desperation I made a Facebook group called "EFFEXOR (Venlafaxine) Side Effects, Withdrawal and Discontinuation Syndrome" not expecting anyone to join and now have over 3K members. It took me almost a year to figure out what I was experiencing was Post-Acute Withdrawal Syndrome (PAWS) also known as Protracted Withdrawals and the reason I couldn't get any medical help, attention or support is because it's not listed in the DSM-5 manual.

My life as I knew it came to a screeching halt in pure torture overnight due to our failed so-called healthcare system and medical professionals.

It's been 4 years and 8 months of hell (numerous debilitating symptoms). Currently, I can barely take care of myself; shower (approx. every 3-4 weeks sometimes longer), fix food to eat, pay bills, rarely brush my teeth, etc. I have an in-home counselor that comes once a week for 1 1/2 hours to check on me and help me with things like getting my mail, getting me groceries, etc. My house hasn't been cleaned since all this happened to me. On top of my numerous symptoms I still deal with my withdrawals have stolen all my desires, goals, you name it. I feel completely blank inside. If you want a list of current symptoms I can put a list together for you.

All of this could've been avoided if our healthcare system and so-called professionals informed patients; about withdrawals, acknowledges that antidepressants can cause withdrawals and protracted withdrawals, knew how to taper patients slowly and safely off antidepressants (10% or less every 3-4 weeks that I've read about), and STOP prescribing drugs to try and cover up withdrawal symptoms just to name a few.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Something needs to change how doctors interact with patients, dismissing everything they say and how these medications are being prescribed so freely without the knowledge of how they work and how to taper patients safely. No one should EVER have to endure this suffering.