

## PE1651/OO

Annie Codie submission of 6 January 2018

I am deeply concerned that in the whole of the UK there is NO professional help available to help people come off prescribed medication.

My GPs told me I should come off Valium but when I said how? they could not answer me. I was terrified that the latest GP I have,, would just stop prescribing it, as I knew from bitter experience how vile withdrawal was, so 30 months ago I decided to withdrawal from diazepam. I had been on it for 32 years. I phoned Bristol Tranquilliser support group who told me about The Ashton Manual. They were also kind enough to send me some literature with tapering suggestions. So thus Sept 2015 I began my taper. I was required to check in with my GP every month to get my diazepam prescription. I was given a 5 minute appt. Usually I was not listened to. I remember when at Christmas I was told to reduce from 20mg to 15mg this was a 33% Reduction over a Month not the 10% recommended in the Ashton Manual. I hit severe withdrawal 18 days later and went back to my GP..I said I was cutting too fast could I reduce more slowly..it was suggested I was actually depressed not in withdrawal and the Dr suggested I up my anti-depressant prescription?????? I was not depressed!! Anyway I quoted the Ashton Manual at them it was ignored. I went home quite upset I then looked at NICE guidelines and said they were breaking the recommendations in them. The level of ignorance is profound. I lost count of the times my GP tutted actually shouted at me threatened to quote prescribe a daily amount as I could not be trusted to keep to his guideline's. Frequently he would say I know better than you NO he did not.....Withdrawing from benzodiazepines has been a long tortuous process...One I could not have faced when working fulltime and bringing up my sons. I have been very limited in the amount of paid work I could do. For 30 years I was a teacher, I had lived in terror of ever being found to be an addict. Until 2 years ago the only people that knew I was on Benzos were My husband, kids and GP...I never told any employer.....Benzo dependence ruled my life and affected every decision I made. The fear and shame was huge. But the shame is not mine. I am a good person, a mother, a wife a friend a 40 year tax payer. I have never abused illegal drugs yet when it came to getting off Benzos...a class C drug THERE was no help. It was only when I went online that I discovered there were hundreds like me if not thousands.....I was actually better off than many who had been maimed, permanently damaged. I have heard much about the link between long term benzo use and the risk of brain damage and an increased risk of dementia/alzimers. My Dr will not refer me to a neurologist. This seems par for the course...I asked him why and he said the radiation is dangerous???????? I think people are terrified to join up the dots as I suspect many exposed to long term benzos may have brain damage. This is a drug that quote should not be prescribed for more than 2-4 weeks. I have been taking it daily for 32 years.....Totally unable to stop without help guidelines etc. I am now 2 months off. I have been lied too by so many. I went to A and E in October with severe feelings of what felt like an electrical current in my head, hands feet I had googled my symptoms and it appeared they could indicate something like Lupus or MS etc. I told staff at the hospital that I had withdrawn this medication but no-one was joining up the dots.....I was given blood tests and an ecg.....Told nothing was wrong...although the brain zaps felt very serious. I had a follow up apt with a Dr who I spoke too. I still was feeling dreadful and had my son's graduation coming up. She seemed at a total loss to explain what

may be happening but did look alarmed. She suggested I take a few Valium to help me through my sons graduation ????? Or quote up your anti-depressant ??????. I felt that she might label me crazy going on about zizzing in my head. I also had what I now know to be severe depersonalisation and derealisation these scary symptoms persisted for about 6 weeks. I endured my sons graduation rather than enjoyed it.

As I start 2018 I hope no-one has to withdraw from any prescribed Medication.. benzodiazepines, Anti-depressants, Tramadol etc without proper education.

What I really hope is Gps will not prescribe these meds in the first place. They should be a last resort not a first resort. I am currently tapering Anti-depressants and Tramadol. I intend to do it with online help as I do not trust my Dr to know what to do or even care.....I do not have any serious Mental Health issue, never have had so am sad and angry that I cannot get back those 32 years. I Know for sure without having to worry about being somehow deficient for having labels and taking meds

I would have made decisions differently. I am lucky My wonderful husband has always supported me in everyway. People that are going through this alone must be suicidal.

I hope you will listen and DO something