

## PE1651/Y

Submission of 5 January 2018

I am a mother of three. As of today I am seven months and eight days clean off my antidepressant Venlafaxine Effexor which is in the SSRI group. I am still very much suffering from after effects and in recovery after long term use. Which means today I am not able to tell my story to the best of my ability so I will give you the bones as best I can. The main reason I want my story heard is that after I was manipulated and coerced into taking this drug I was told it was not addictive. I was essentially just left on the medication for years, this stretch eight and a half years.

They did not make me better.

The beginning is probably a common story I had a difficult time at home and at the age of 18 I was diagnosed with clinical depression. After I left home I was signed off work work and given various medication. But there seemed to be a lack of education around it I was not offered any counselling or even any information regarding the medication itself. I was left with a packet off drugs with no warnings or support. I will admit to not taking to them properly I took one or two they made me sick so I went back and said they didn't work so was sent away with different ones but in my mind I thought like a painkiller they should work instantly and they didn't.

When I was 20 I had my first daughter and things changed I thought i'd turned a corner and I look back at that young woman and feel utter sadness and regret and dearly wish there was proper support and understanding for young people dealing with issues.

Like most young woman with troubled backgrounds most probably I suffered with post natal depression, by the time my daughter was 10 months old I had lost too much wieght. The doctors told me I had to stop breastfeeding and if lost anymore wieght I was going to be sectioned. This is where the story gets difficult I had a very clear ultimatum. I had no family around me and a partner who had no clue how to do anything let alone look after a child. I was seen by the mental health team who were urging me to put things in place so if i was sectioned I would need to have someone to legally care for my daughter and the pressure was on me to put on wieght and one of the nurses persuaded me to try the venlafaxine the doctors were trying to prescribe. I felt manipulated as I wanted to find an alternative but with no other option I took them. There I believe my fate was sealed.

The following year I fell pregnant again this time with my partner ending the relationship if I went ahead with the pregnancy. I couldn't not have the baby so then not only did my relationship breakdown the doctor told me I had to discontinue the medication. Of course I knew this but I was extremely vulnerable! The doctor told me he would give me a week half a dose and that was it, I said to him " could we please not do it too quickly?" He looked at me unsympathetically and sniggered "you aren't on crack".

Of course I won't be the only person that says that this drug is addictive. I went through hell but I did have a baby and a baby on the way to suffer through but I was

suicidal and agitated which I was never before. I was repeatedly told it was not the medication.

My home life did improve after this I settled down with another partner and although still vulnerable to past issues I was able to function, get a job and my weight was stable. I then had my youngest daughter who was born just as my middle daughter turned two. I breastfed her for over a year and was quite happy. However when I stopped breastfeeding cracks began to show I felt low, tired and tearful. I went to the doctor, a different doctor but another one who looked at just one solution, I was put back on the medication.

What follows is a train crash and the end of life as I knew it.

The medication made me detached and unable to focus on normal day to day activities. Four months later we moved home and my daughter was admitted to hospital with meningitis and although I was able to focus on getting through the initial crisis. I had a complete breakdown. I became increasingly suicidal, anxious and agitated. My dosage on my antidepressant was doubled and I was given valium and sleeping tablets. This concoction of drugs given to me seems baffling to me now as I was openly saying I was suicidal. But what followed was a cycle of uppers, downers, increased agitation and psychosis. I became manic and reckless I felt more and more detached from reality. The medication was open to abuse and I started to abuse alcohol to calm down or quiet my mind. For nearly three years I had a range of professionals walking in and out telling me I was ill and I was not doing enough to put it right, I needed to work with everyone. Great things to say to someone who is agitated and suicidal. I was however repeatedly asking for help at one point I was at the doctors at the very least once a fortnight but sometimes on a weekly basis asking for help. At no point did anyone address the issue of medication or even query it?

After a particular bad episode which I tried to come off the tablets. I was put on a lower dose I stopped any other medication. Which I think is the saddest part.

Things within my home life began to settle so I started to stabilise around it I don't believe I mended I just started to function better around it I became less agitated and reckless but I became more detached. In this sense professionals slowly stopped having concerns, I stopped asking for help things seemed to get better on the surface. But the issues didn't go away the tablets still affected my thought process, my memory is patchy and that made me aggressive and volatile. I became a machine and worked non stop. I feel like years have just fallen out of my head. For the last seven years I've had no brake, no way of listening to the needs of my body or life. I stopped feeling anything I didn't know I was too tired or too hungry. After a particularly stressful end to 2015 I felt I had to address my life and most aspects. When I was able to reduce my workload I weaned off the venlafaxine still believing that they wouldn't be addictive. The withdrawals were utter hell but the shock was genuinely believing that physical effects were all I needed to worry about. Now the utter horror is now months later I am suffering with days of severe agitation sleepless nights and debilitating headaches amongst other things.

I believe that we all have the right to find out why we were persuaded to take these drugs and why we were left on them for so long. I feel I was manipulated into taking

them and then told they weren;t addictive and then repeatedly criticed for my thoughts and feelings on the medication. I feel I was let down and could very easily been statistic suicide and forgotten about. I am not and I will be vocal. But feel my children were let down repeatedly and were robbed of their mother. I trusted a system that clearly didnt know what it was doing and i deserve to find our whether I have been left with permanant damage.

Thank you for reading.