

PE1651/JJJJJ

Anonymous submission of 14 February 2018

In November/December 2015 I was treated for stage IV base of tongue cancer, thankfully the treatment brought the cancer into full remission. Unfortunately this was followed by very deep depression, which I believe is common after cancer.

I was already taking Fluoxetine 20mg for "prevention of low mood" for several years, weather it was making any difference I don't know, but in the absence of any side effects I kept taking it almost as a prop. My doctor advised increasing the dose to 40mg in light of the recent depression, which I agreed to. This did not seem to make any difference to my condition. My doctor then decided change of antidepressant would be a good idea he justified this with the following reason.

"Its just like a field that stops producing good crops after a few years, the farmer needs to change the field"

His suggested change was to Sertraline 50mg, I was to reduce the Fluoxetine to 20mg for 2 weeks, then stop for another 2 weeks then start then start taking the Sertraline.

I followed the reduction scheme and started to feel a bit better so did not start the Sertraline, however a few months later the depression returned in anger , I cracked and started taking the Sertraline.

This was the worst decision of my life. I had an immediate severe adverse reaction, within 20 minutes my anxiety increased to a level that I did not think was possible, I developed a terrible headache and diarrhoea and just went back to bed for the rest of the day.

I took another tablet the next day thinking the initial reaction would die down soon. Things just got worse, I developed severe tinnitus and lost my libido completely. I had the feeling of translucent curtains being pulled around me, shutting me off from the world.

Foolishly I took another tablet the next day before realising I was being poisoned by this drug.

In the following days I found my memory and cognition had been severely affected, not being able to put names to faces, getting lost in familiar surroundings and not being able to work through simple problems.

I also developed insomnia, I am unable to sleep for more than one and a half hours per night.

All this from just 3 x 50mg Sertraline tablets.

As the months passed I felt the urge to take my life, I knew this wasn't a conscious decision but some effect of the drug.

The sexual effect of this drug on me are devastating. I have lost all sexual feelings, It has now been just over a year since this happened and none of these symptoms has remitted or improved in any way.

My doctor tells me that the above is "impossible and that there are no recorded cases of this"

After many months of asking to see a specialist I was granted 15 minutes with a psychiatrist, I wasn't expecting much, but I didn't expect to be mocked and have him chuckle as I went through my story, he said he had never heard of this happening before and all he could offer was more medication, which I "politely" declined, his passing shot was to give me a prescription for Viagra

I'm going to keep this brief, not because I have little to say, but because a prescribed SSRI has taken away my ability to express myself as well as I used to. In November/December 2015 I was treated for stage IV base of tongue cancer, the treatment was punishing but ultimately effective, I am now in remission. However as is relatively common after cancer treatment I developed severe depression and was prescribed 50mg Sertraline daily.

I had a severe and immediate adverse reaction to this drug. After taking just three of these tablets the following symptoms ensued immediately. My doctor did not warn me of any of these effects.

1. Insomnia, I am unable to sleep for more than one and a half hours per night, I don't dream any more.
2. Tinnitus, constant high pitched tone coming from somewhere in the centre of my head
3. Memory and cognition problems
 - (i) Difficulty in putting names to faces
 - (ii) Difficulty in remembering new information
 - (iii) Difficulty organizing and performing simple tasks
 - (iv) Constantly being caught out by what appear to be optical illusions
4. Sexual problems
 - (i) Total loss of libido
 - (ii) Unable to achieve a good erection
 - (iii) Vastly reduced semen volume
 - (iv) Total loss of any sexual emotions
5. Worsening of depression

These problems have persisted for over a year with absolutely no remission, in addition after a few months I developed a strong desire to take my own life, this was not a rational decision, but felt "chemical" in some way.

The reaction I have had from the medical "profession" has been disgraceful. I have been told that this is simply just not possible and that there are no recorded cases of this ever happening before.

The belief seems to be that the drug is out my system by now and can't possibly be affecting me still.

At a fifteen minute meeting with a psychiatrist I was chuckled at while I told my story, the only treatment offered to me was more drugs! I politely declined. A quick search of the internet and content of several forums show that this is a massive problem for many people worldwide.

How can the medical profession deny this is happening?

My life has been negatively impacted by this treatment, I would go so far as to say to ruined, quite literally. I nearly died as a consequence of negligent GPs not diagnosing my cancer (I had to go private) I was treated by competent and compassionate NHS staff for my cancer and was looking forward to starting a new life....only to be destroyed by an arrogant and careless mental health system that relies almost exclusively on drugs and information supplied by big pharma. I am so pleased that Scotland is making a stand against these terrible damaging drugs and sincerely hope that this type of treatment will go the same way as lobotomies.

I hope my brief story goes some way to help this happening.