

## **PE1651/MMMMMM**

Rachel Carroll submission of 12 February 2018

At 41 years old I entered perimenopause with a resounding thud. The cluster of symptoms I presented with to numerous medical professionals, all pointed perfectly to menopause. Despite a family history of early menopause, and all the symptoms that suggested menopause, I was refused hormone treatment due to being too young to be going through menopause. And so my journey to beyond the depths of hell commenced.

I do feel it necessary to point out that prior to the drugging that would ensue, I was an extremely highly functioning member of society. I never suffered from anxiety or depression, I had a near perfect life and I woke up every day reminding myself how lucky I was to be blessed with such a wonderful life. But that was suddenly about to change when benzodiazepines were introduced to combat menopausal insomnia.

From the very first benzodiazepine pill 3.5 years ago, I have lived in a tortured and altered state of reality. I took benzos for approximately four months during which time I was in and out of the doctors office, pathology, emergency department and specialist offices. My mental and physical health declined rapidly. I could not function and was bedridden, my family holding a bedside vigil as I prepared to say goodbye to my family. My family and I had no conclusion to reach other than an obscure undiagnosable disease that would be ultimately lead to my death.

Having no answers and deteriorating rapidly I was then cold turkeyed off the equivalent of 20mg of valium and put on the antidepressant Effexor. I took this drug for two weeks during which time I openly started talking about suicide to the husband whom I loved and adored, the father to my young children whom I loved and adored.

Shortly after my introduction to Effexor I hospitalised myself and was diagnosed with major depression. Never at any point did any medical professional suggest it could have been the drugs despite there being mounting undeniable evidence that should point in that direction.

The horrific symptoms that I encountered during this time (some still to this day even at 16 months off the drugs) are too numerous to list, but here I provide a small sample for your reference: suicidal depression, akathasia, extreme anxiety, brain zaps, amnesia, lack of any human emotion aside from extreme fear, intrusive thoughts a human brain would not normally produce, inability to differentiate hot from cold on my skin, visual disturbances, paranoia, hallucinations, olfactory hallucinations, hearing loss, nausea, optical migraines, severe vertigo, tinnitus, myoclonic jerks, extreme nerve pain, inability to cry, feeling detached from reality. These symptoms are unforgiving and beyond cruel.

What is even more distressing than these symptoms is the fact that every second person I speak to is on these drugs, or has been at some point. Often they have been put on them for depression when all they wanted was counselling. They did not believe they even had depression. They continue to take them not because they are ill but because the withdrawal symptoms are life threatening both physically and mentally. None of these people have been warned of the addictive nature of these

drugs and the horrific withdrawal symptoms which can last years, and nor was I.

How can the medical establishment and governments continue to ignore the damage these drugs are causing. Suicide rates are increasing, depression is increasing and so is the prescribing of these drugs. If the drugs worked rates would be decreasing. How can this simple fact be ignored.

Prescribing of these drugs must stop. Withdrawal centres for psychotropic drugs must be established along with support services.

Please take notice of these submissions, and act accordingly. This is an epidemic which is responsible for the deaths of a number of innocent victims. The family members of people who have committed suicide on these drugs, and due to horrific withdrawal they cause, need to know the truth about why their family member died. The world needs to know the truth.