

PE1651/MMMMMMMM

Nina Davies submission of 31 January 2018

The following in my submission as pertains to benzodiazepine injury, specifically Klonopin (clonazepam), taken as prescribed by a Doctor.

In 1998 I was prescribed Klonopin (clonazepam), 1 mg to be taken at bedtime for mild insomnia. The prescribing Doctor told me that the drug was safe and non addictive.

I took the Klonopin (clonazepam), as prescribed until 2011 when I learned of the dangers of benzodiazepines and sought help in getting off of them as I had learned that doing it alone could result in seizures or death. My dose increased over time as the drug was causing problems of increased insomnia and anxiety that I had not had prior to taking the drug. I was taking 2 mgs when I decided I needed to get off the drug.

I checked myself into a treatment center and was cold turkeyed off the drug resulting in severe withdrawal symptoms and the need to be reinstated 5 months later. The symptoms included dizziness, tremors, vision problems, loss of appetite, trouble walking, extreme fatigue and agitation, extreme anxiety, tinnitus, vertigo, brain fog, muscle weakness, cognitive impairment, heart palpitations, numbness in my limbs, nerve pain and many more.

A year and a half after being reinstated on 1 mg of klonopin (clonazepam), I began the process of tapering off the drug myself. I took 12 months to slowly taper off the klonopin (clonazepam). Towards the end of my taper I was given valium at 10 mg to help the withdrawal symptoms. It took me a year to get off the Klonopin (clonazepam), and 33 more months to get off the valium. Every reduction caused increased symptoms both in number of symptoms and severity.

I have been unable to work since 2011. I lost my marriage, my home, my business and a significant number of close relationships, my ability to function in the world in anything close to a normal way. As of January, 31st 2018, I will have been off any benzodiazepines for 2 years. I still suffer from all of the symptoms mentioned above with the exception of tremors which have stopped. I did have 3 seizures in the first year of being drug free. At 2 years free of these drugs I am still suffering intensely. I can not work, I can not do many of the things that make for a life. I am in emotional and physical pain 24/7. I have developed phobias including agoraphobia and social anxieties. I live in a state of fear. My sensory perceptions are disturbed, my cognitive abilities greatly reduced. I am a shadow of the woman I was before this nightmare began. I was a social, positive, friendly, outgoing person with a great sense of humor. I was professionally successful and had tons of strong friendships and relationships with others. I loved life. I now live inside of a painful shell. I notice little improvement as the months go by.

This is a tragedy for me, my family and all who know me. It is a tragedy for thousands of people who for whatever reason are grossly affected by these dangerous drugs. I have

no history of mental illness and was always a healthy and vibrant person. My life has been taken away from me by these drugs. Something must be done by the powers that have the ability to do something. There needs to be adequate warning to anyone who is prescribed these drugs of the potential harm involved in withdrawal. There needs to be informed consent. I would never have taken these drugs if I had been properly informed of their potential dangers.

I am now 63 years old and have given almost 7 years of my life to trying to get free of the drugs and return to health. I have no idea how much longer recovery will take.