

PE1651/OOOOOO

Anonymous submission of 15 February 2018

I am writing this email to forward my experience of withdrawal from the antidepressant Amitriptyline. I have had chronic fatigue syndrome since 2012 which has been made a lot worse since taking a drug I was prescribed for insomnia I was given Amitriptyline by a GP back in August 2016. I was originally taking 10mg which was increased to 25mg after two weeks. The drug worked perfectly fine for six weeks. I had no side effects other than it helping my insomnia before having a massive adverse reaction to the drug which I have not fully recovered from even now, February 2018.

I was obviously unable to metabolise the drug as for three months following the last dose I felt deathly ill. I had a poisoned feeling which was intolerable and ten times worse than the worst hangover you could imagine. I was also sleeping about sixteen hours a day as I couldn't get the drug out of my system. I would also wake up completely paralysed for around half an hour everyday for around three months following the last dose. Every muscle in my body would be paralysed and I was unable to move despite being fully conscious, even my eyelids would be paralysed for a few minutes. I also had serious breathing difficulties for months after also.

They are some of the worst of the physical problems I had from this drug but I had serious cognitive and spiritual problems also. I can only describe this feeling as if my brain was paralysed. I had a complete inability to even think or carry out normal simple mental tasks online. I felt as if I was surviving on instinct as I couldn't even initiate enough mental power to figure out how to do something as simple as get myself food from the kitchen. When people spoke to me I could barely understand anything said to me. My memory was awful. The cognitive effects were profound and are still here to this day although much better than they were.

I had taken this drug purely for insomnia and had no depression whatsoever but around three months after the last dose I felt as if the drug was finally starting to leave my system as the deathly poisoned feeling was starting to ease a little bit and I was able to start to think slightly better but at this stage feelings of complete madness started to begin and a crippling feeling of depression had begun. I had feelings of general madness and had lost all human feelings. I felt as if I had become asexual and felt no connection to my previous life whatsoever. I felt like a completely different person and had no interest in anything that was previously important to me. It basically felt as if this drug had ripped my soul out, that's the only way I can think to describe it. I had a constant urge to kill myself and don't know how I didn't.

Now in February 2018 I am much better than I was compared to the horrific experience I had for the first few months but I am still left with many problems. I have been unable to make any progress in recovering from my chronic fatigue. The drug feels as if it has left my physical health static and unable to progress with any kind of recovery. Before the drug my chronic fatigue would improve a lot with adequate rest but I seem to have lost powers of recovery since this adverse reaction. My muscles feel dead and my reaction times have slowed down massively since the drug reaction. I have a general feeling of everything having slowed down. I have pretty bad

cognitive difficulties still but not as bad. My chronic fatigue was purely physical before the drug reaction but now I have severe mental fatigue too. I have been left with sexual dysfunction also and still I'm quite depressed but not as bad. I reiterate I had no feelings of depression before taking this drug and it was purely for insomnia.

I was not warned about any of the problems this drug can cause and think it's disgusting that these withdrawal syndromes are played down by doctors. They were also useless in helping me through these times. I called them to tell them I'd had a massive adverse reaction to the drug and that I couldn't metabolise it and they were actually stupid enough to tell me to keep taking it even though it had nearly killed me. I wasn't taken seriously at all and I'd completely given up with them. The drug has generally made my life a lot worse. I'm unable to do some of the more complicated things online anymore and can only stick to simple tasks cognitively. Also I'm having problems learning new things and have to stick to what I know. I don't have interest in things like I used to do. I have to force myself to participate in things which is very unlike me. I am also much more reclused at home and haven't been well enough to leave the house much at all since this happened. I think some kind of helpline for people going through similar problems to mine would be very helpful and some other kinds of services also.