

PE1651/QQQQ

Lucy Murray submission of 18 January 2018

My citalopram nightmare:

At the age of 28, one month after my birthday my life would change as I knew it. In June 2016, I was prescribed a common antidepressant called citalopram. I had taken the same antidepressant before beginning in late 2010 for 4 years. During those 4 years I experienced typical side effects being weight gain, and a lack of interest in sex. I went to my GP after my honeymoon in 2014, and decided to come off citalopram. I was no longer experiencing anxiety and was desperate to lose weight and eventually start a family.

My GP's advice was to come off the drug over 2 weeks. I did so as my GP instructed. Reducing the dose in half and alternating daily. I experienced some mild head zaps and some morning anxiety I was unfamiliar with, however, this soon disappeared.

Fast forward 18 months off citalopram, I experienced some anxiety and stress having moved home, town and needed to find a job. The stress of applying for jobs, attending several job interviews, and financial worries bothered me so I went back to my GP.

Within a few minutes I walked out with a prescription for citalopram in my hand, the standard 20mg therapeutic dose, believing this would help the stress I was experiencing. What happened next is unimaginable to most people and for my family and I truly heart breaking.

After a couple of days back on citalopram I was delusional and psychotic. I thought I had murdered my husband and dog with a kitchen knife. I believed I was a danger to everyone, and had non stop intrusive harming thoughts, no sleep, no appetite, pains, severe agitation, and an episode of hypomania (elated and thinking I had cured anxiety). This went on for about eight weeks.

During those weeks I was informed by GP's and staff at the local hospital to stay on citalopram, and would soon find myself on a cocktail of citalopram, lorazepam, diazepam and quetiapine.

I was deteriorating, losing my mind as my brain was being chemically tortured by these drugs, my poor body unable to metabolise them.

I knew these drugs would kill me if I didn't get off. Symptoms of drug toxicity had already begun when my GP performed blood tests whilst on citalopram. Blood and urine tests revealed I had very low potassium levels in my kidneys (requiring 2 ECG's), raised blood counts, and protein and ketones in my urine.

I came off all drugs on 1st August 2016. I desperately hoped I would be back to my old self and the six week hell of an ordeal would be over. Only that didn't happen.

It's January 2018 as I write this email to you. I haven't felt a positive emotion since the reaction. I battle suicidal thoughts daily, purely because I can no longer identify with who I use to be. I am a shell of who I was. I suffer with chronic fatigue, severe apathy, serious episodes of depression, depersonalization/derealization, unable to sense time or atmosphere, racing thoughts, poor memory loss, unable to form new memories, confusion, vivid dreams and nightmares, blurred vision, visual snow, and tinnitus. There isn't a moment when I am symptom free. My life is now in ruins. I want to assure you I never experienced any of these symptoms prior to this citalopram, and would never have considered myself mentally unwell.

I had never seen a psychiatrist. I had a normal life as a wife, worked full time in financial services, enjoyed hobbies such as swimming and cooking, could drive and enjoyed holidays. I now have to live off disability benefits and live in council housing because I am unable to work, and my marriage fell apart last year.

What I would like most from this is for the medical community to stop informing patients these pills are safe and effective. Inform patient's why suicide is a side effect and what can happen if you are unable to metabolize these drugs. Health care professionals to be more aware of the symptoms of serotin syndrome, withdrawal and neuroplectic malignant syndrome. Monitor patients closely beginning antidepressants. Work together in the medical community to produce safe tapering plans for patients wishing to discontinue antidepressants.

Please take our accounts seriously. I assure you if this happened to you or someone you know, you would do everything in your power to see these drugs only prescribed in desperate measures and would want to prevent this happening to anyone else. How many more lives are going to be taken and damaged needlessly ?