

## **PE1651/VVVV**

Belinda Steed submission of 28 January 2018

Withdrawal from venlafaxine

I'm 50yrs old and have recently stopped taking venlafaxine.

2 years ago, I went to my GP and said that I felt that the medication was giving me too many side effects. Coincidence maybe, but during the period of taking venlafaxine I have also been given Amlodipine, Losartan Potassium, Indapamide, Bisoprolol and Isosorbide Monotrate.

I have had steroid injections in my wrist and shoulder, my left leg swelled up and was so painful that the GP diagnosed gout but then the blood results were negative, I hurt like my body is arthritic all over and after sitting for an hour or so, my feet can hardly carry me, walking like a woman twice my age. This is just a quick summary of physical symptoms.

I have had pain all down the right side of my face, inside and out and after visiting both the dentist and my GP, was given more medication, another anti depressant called amitriptyline to reduce nerve pain.

So, I came to the conclusion that it must be side effects of the venlafaxine as I had none of this before. I followed my GP's instructions to stop the venlafaxine but within the first week I felt odd. I couldn't put my finger on it, I just felt different in a negative way. I didn't want to worry my husband unnecessarily so I went into another room to phone the out of hours surgery. After taking information, they advised my to call 101. After answering more questions with 101 services, they informed me that due to concern, they were sending a paramedic to my house. The paramedic was unable to get a reading of my blood pressure as it was much too high, as was my pulse, my hole body was shaking/shivering at this point, yet I was calm in my mind, in fact, I was being quite jovial about the situation. The ambulance came next and blue lit my way to hospital, still, I was calm in my mind, knowing I was in safe hands. At the hospital, they finally got my blood pressure and it was either 210 dystolic or systolic over or under 114 dystolic or systolic. It's a little while ago now and I can't remember what way round it was.

Anyway, I calmly asked the staff if this could be a result of coming off of the venlafaxine and they said no, apparently I was having a panic attack! Now don't get me wrong, but I know my body and there was nooooo way I was having a panic attack! I was calm the whole time, my husband, who knows me well, agreed with what I thought. So after my blood pressure came down, and my heart rate, I was discharged with the advise to continue coming off the venlafaxine as told by my GP, so I did.

By the following week, I was a recluse, self harming, suicidal and having the crisis team visit me daily. I was seeing 1 psychiatrist after another every few days as an out patient who then put me on mirtazapine to calm me. Finally I met another psychiatrist who felt I was having withdrawals from venlafaxine and immediately put me back on it, then ttttaaadddaaa..... I was ok!

Once I was stable, I went back to the GP to ask again to be weaned off, but slowly! I had already been to the pharmacy who told me they could get it in liquid form so I knew it was available before I went to my GP.

Low and behold, the GP was not allowed/able to prescribe liquid form and the smallest dose they could give me was 37.5mg. SO, over the next 12 months I have weaned myself off, cutting up tablets and going slowly slowly and with the help of Facebook users in venlafaxine group pages.

While I was ill, I wrote the following

### **My thoughts on paper today**

They took away my meds

They hung me out to dry

My world began to crumble

And all I did was cry

The paramedics came around

They rushed me to A & E

They said, carry on as normal

It's only anxiety

My body shook n shuddered

My mood was mean and low

I pushed away my loved ones

I wanted to die, just go

Now 5 weeks down the road

I finally did see

A very good psychiatrist

And he agreed with me

Yes I have depression

But this was not the cause

The abrupt cease of medication

Withdrawal has its flaws

And now I am back on the meds

And other meds as well

I'm already feeling better

I'm not living in such hell

I look at all the scars I made

And think of things I've said

I can't believe that that was me

So close to my death bed

I'm not out of the woods yet

I've still got far to go

So much is bottled up inside me

Some things I didn't know