

PE1651/XX

Anonymous submission of 3 January 2018

I am contributing my abridged iatrogenic benzodiazepine withdrawal journey.

On May 11th, 2015, I sought care for treatment of new onset right hand tremor and bilateral blepharospams. After a brief consultation, I was presented a prescription for Clonazepam 0.5mg PO TID. No patient education nor informed consent was provided. The filling pharmacy provided a standard package insert upon dispensing. Tranquilizing effects were experienced after the first dose with tremoring and spasms reduced and/or eliminated.

Clonazepam 0.5mg PO TID was taken for 78 days as prescribed and discontinued 'cold turkey' July 27th, 2015 due to interdose withdrawal symptoms. The doctor and his staff provided no tapering instructions and no withdrawal warnings. Within 72 hours, I experienced a horrific spasm of the trapezius muscle prompting a call to my primary care physician, who instructed me to restart a 0.5mg dose of Clonazepam. I drafted my own tapering schedule over 45 days (31 days at 0.5mg QD, 7 days at 0.25mg QD, and 7 days at 0.125mg QD), discontinuing the medication on September 14th, 2015. On the 14th of this month of January 2018, I will be Clonazepam-free for 27 months; however far from freedom of symptoms. I am fighting for my life in a protracted benzodiazepine withdrawal.

Since my discontinuance of Clonazepam, I have maintained a diary of withdrawal symptoms. Windows of heaven and waves of hell with no two hours the same. Of more than 25 intermittent symptoms, my greatest grievances are crippling nausea, faintness, bilateral nerve pains of upper and lower extremities, tremoring, and derealization/depersonalization. Symptoms exacerbate with exercise, hypoglycemia, hormonal shifts, and stress.

I have exhausted my full health saving account on symptomatic testing with the specialties of Neurology, Internal Medicine, Infectious Disease, Optometry, and Psychiatry. All laboratory and radiologic testing was clear. Not one specialist was familiar with PAWS (Post-Acute Withdrawal Syndrome) until I presented them with a diary of my symptoms and personal research, including the Ashton Manual. The malpractice became clear to me that my providers were competent to start me on Clonazepam; yet, incompetent to stop me. 27 months and counting

Thank you in advance for committing to reading this abridged account. Please answer the call for funded research so my suffering is not in vain.

May God bless us with a healthy, happy New Year of healing.