A PATIENT’S JOURNEY

Consequences of Antidepressants/Benzodiazepines

LIFE CRISIS AND/OR TRAUMA
FEELING OVERWHELMED

Insomnia, anxiety, panic, anger, depressed, not coping

VISIT EFFECTIVE THERAPIST
TELL STORY - FEEL HEARD & VALIDATED
Psychoeducation, understanding
Breathing, Guided Imagery
Trauma recognised/healing

PATIENT RETURNS TO LIFE - NEEDS MET

VISIT GP
Started on antidepressants (AD) or benzodiazepines (BZ)
GP advises: Stay on ADs for AT LEAST SIX MONTHS

Patient wishes to stop
GP advises rapid taper
Withdrawal symptoms

Doctor misdiagnoses relapse, puts patient back on ADs/BZs
No response or adverse effects = dosage increased or other drugs added
Patient unable to stop, seeks help elsewhere

SLOW TAPER
Patient may or may not get off the drugs
Withdrawal problems
Protracted syndrome
Multiple physical symptoms
Patient seeks medical advice
GP blames underlying condition
Patient undergoes extensive and costly tests

GP/Specialist diagnoses Medically Unexplained Symptoms (MUS)
Functional Somatic Syndromes
Treated with CBT/Graded exercise
Potentially given ADs

Patient disabled with no understanding and little support
A PATIENT’S JOURNEY
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“Clinicians need to add SSRI to the list of drugs potentially inducing withdrawal symptoms upon discontinuation, together with benzodiazepines, barbiturates and other psychotropic drugs” (Fava G. A. et al 2015)

What is MUS?
“Medically Unexplained Symptoms (MUS) refers to persistent bodily complaints for which adequate examination does not reveal sufficiently explanatory structural or other specified pathology. MUS are common, with a spectrum of severity, and patients are found in all areas of the healthcare system. Patients with MUS are more likely to attribute their illness to physical causes rather than lifestyle factors. This can include symptoms such as pain in different parts of the body, functional disturbance of organ systems and complaints of fatigue or exhaustion.”

SIGNES AND SYMPTOMS OF WITHDRAWAL FROM SSRIS www.karger.com/Article/FullText/370338

SYSTEM INVOLVED SYMPTOMS
General Flu-like symptoms, fatigue, weakness, tiredness, headache, tachycardia, dyspnea
Balance Gait instability, ataxia, dizziness, light headedness, vertigo
Sensory Paraesthesias, electric-shock sensations, myalgias, neuralgias, tinnitus, altered taste, pruritus
Visual Visual changes, blurred vision
Neuromotor Tremor, myoclonus, ataxia, muscle rigidity, jerkiness, muscle aches, facial numbness
Vasomotor Sweating, flushing, chills
Sleep Insomnia, vivid dreams, nightmares, hypersomnia, lethargy
Gastrointestinal Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, anorexia, abdominal pain
Affective Anxiety, agitation, tension, panic, depression, intensification of suicidal ideation, irritability, impulsiveness, aggression, anger, bouts of crying, mood swings, derealization and depersonalization
Psychotic Visual and auditory hallucinations
Cognitive Confusion, decreased concentration, amnesia
Sexual Genital hypersensitivity, premature ejaculation

FUNCTIONAL SOMATIC SYNDROMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYMPTOMS (COMBINATION OF)</th>
<th>SYNDROME</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bloating, constipation, loose stools, abdominal pain</td>
<td>Irritable Bowel Syndrome</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fatigue (particularly post-exertional and long recovery) pain, sensitivity to smell</td>
<td>Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Myalgic Encephalomyelitis</td>
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<td>Headache, vomiting, dizziness</td>
<td>Post Concussion Syndrome</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pelvic pain, painful sex, painful periods</td>
<td>Chronic pelvic pain</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pain and tender joints, fatigue</td>
<td>Fibromyalgia/Chronic widespread pain</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chest pain, palpitations, shortness of breath</td>
<td>Non cardiac chest pain</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shortness of breath</td>
<td>Hyperventilation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jaw pain, teeth grinding</td>
<td>Temporo-mandibular Joint Dysfunction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reaction to smells, light</td>
<td>Multiple Chemical Sensitivity</td>
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Source: Joint Commissioning Panel for mental health, Guidance MUS, Feb 2017, www.jcpmh.info

NOTE THE CLEAR SIMILARITIES IN THE SYMPTOMS OF WITHDRAWAL AND ‘UNEXPLAINED’ SYMPTOMS