BARRY HASLAM'S STORY

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Email Barry Haslam

"A full public inquiry is urgently called for, so those guilty for 40 years of cover up, deaths and misery, can be brought to justice"

In 1976, Barry had a complete mental breakdown after 3 years of intensive studying for his accountancy exams (which he passed with flying colours).

Prior to this, Barry was a loving husband and father to his wife, Sue and daughter, Susan and Katherine (then aged 7 and 6 years).

He was a very fit young man who played competitive football twice a week for many years and had trained/played with professional footballers. He went fishing, for personal tranquillity. These activities stopped for ever after being prescribed benzodiazepines drugs from 1976 to 1986. He was legally prescribed a cocktail of antidepressants and benzodiazepines drugs. In 1981, he was given 10mg. of Ativan daily, then 20mg, and by January 1985, he was on 30mg daily plus 12 tablets daily of strong painkillers for headaches.

By this time, Barry had become violent and very aggressive. His weight had ballooned by 5 stones, and he had become, what he describes as a "sick and evil" person – a Jeckyl and Hyde.

He then experienced a "window of lucidity" when he was able to see himself and what his addiction was doing to his family. He weaned himself of the drugs at home, over a 14 month period and finally on 19 March 1986, he finally became drug free.

Barry says he would not like any other human being to experience the horrors and nightmares of his withdrawal, and his 10 years of complete memory loss due to benzodiazepine neuro-poisoning drugs. (The facts quoted from 1976 - 1986, have been taken from his wife, Sue and later from his medical records.)

In 1987, he "set off on a trek" to help others, seek the truth on benzodiazepine drugs, and uncover the wall of silence which the medical profession, drug companies and successive Governments have helped to create.

During this time, he found God (or he says God found him) and His love and support. His wife, Sue and now grown up daughters and grandchildren have sustained and nourished his aim for the truth to be known world wide, of the horrors of these drugs.

Fourteen years off the drugs, Barry still suffers from the after effects of the drugs including the following: brain damage, cognitive defects, headaches, partial deafness in both ears, intense pain in right leg (knee to toe), mood swings, circulation problems, hypothyroidism and breathing problems.

In 1996, Barry was the first person in the United Kingdom to receive Disability Living Allowance (DLA) awarded to him by the Department of Social Security's Tribunal Board because of the brain damage caused by benzodiazepines prescribed in large quantities.

It is largely through Barry's persistence and the support and backing of his local Member of Parliament, Phil Woolas, that the "Beat the Benzos" campaign was launched.

Barry says, "a full public inquiry is urgently called for, so those guilty for 40 years of cover up, deaths and misery, can be brought to justice."

On February 24, 1994 David Blunkett MP (then Shadow Secretary of State for Health) in a letter to Barry Haslam about benzodiazepine tranquillisers wrote:

"I am passing your letter to Paul Boateng who, as legal affairs spokesman, has specific responsibility for the litigation side of what is a national scandal."

On February 25, 1994 Paul Boeteng MP also wrote to Barry Haslam and said:

"Clearly, the aim of all involved in this sorry affair is the provision of justice for the victims of these drugs."

Nightmare addiction cost Barry 10 years of his life

The Oldham Chronicle, 14 May 1998

Barry Haslam lost a decade of his life because of a destructive addiction to tranquillisers. For 10 dark years, he was prescribed a benzodiazepine tranquilliser that is now considered so harmful it is not given to new patients for longer than two weeks.

But Barry, who was left brain-damaged by the addiction, is now fighting back to ensure nobody has to go through the same experience again.

The father of two, with the help of fellow addicts, has compiled a dossier about benzodiazepines, which his local MP Phil Woolas has handed over to a Commons Select Committee on Health.

And Barry now hopes it will spur the Government into action to outlaw the tranquillisers, which kill more people each year than heroin, ecstasy and cocaine combined.

The 54-year-old, said: "It would be brilliant if we finally got the full recognition about what these drugs have done to us. And maybe then the medical profession will put their hands up and admit the part they have played in ruining so many lives."

Barry was first prescribed benzodiazepines after suffering a nervous breakdown – but this only turned out to be the start of his 10-year-long nightmare.

During his addiction, he suffered violent mood swings and memory loss so severe that he does not even remember his children growing up.

His dossier of facts and figures, which took several months to compile, is taken from dozens of medical studies about tranquillisers.

Scandal

In the report, he proclaims: "Someone has to stand up and be counted for what amounts to the biggest medical scandal and denial of natural justice this century. It is caused by the medical profession and the respective drug manufacturers of benzodiazepines, due to apathy of the former and greed of the latter."

Mr Woolas, MP for Oldham East and Saddleworth, has now passed Barry's paper to David Hinchcliffe, chairman of the Commons Select Committee on Health.

The dossier will form part of the evidence to decide whether they will hold a full inquiry into the effects of tranquillisers.

Mr Woolas said: "Barry Haslam and his group were lobbying anyone and everyone, but I felt he needed to redirect the facts of his case to a specific group. "It is hoped their action will now help towards gaining a better understanding of the damaging medical effects of long-term addiction."

And Barry is determined that the voices of the thousands of addicts will be heard.

"The full story behind this would blow your mind," he said. "It is bigger than heroin or cocaine addiction because we have been made involuntary addicts by doctors. But one thing is for sure – the addicts will not go away because there are still a lot of them out there who are still suffering."

Campaigner is given cold shoulder

The Oldham Chronicle
Thursday, February 15, 2001
by Janice Barker

An Oldham tranquilliser campaigner has been cold-shouldered by the Medicines Control Agency. Mr Barry Haslam, a tireless campaigner and letter writer has been told his inquiries are vexatious and unreasonable. And a senior civil servant, has refused to acknowledge or reply to his letters in the future.

Mrs Leigh Henderson, a scientific assessor was replying to four letters in December and one in January from the former accounting technician from Uppermill. She acknowledged there was a large volume of correspondence and said: "Having reviewed that, nothing further is to be gained from continuing. It is our view that your inquiries are vexatious and manifestly unreasonable in their nature. Therefore, unless any further correspondence from you raises new issues, that correspondence will be neither answered nor acknowledged."

Mr Haslam, who recently helped organise the UK's first international conference on benzodiazepine addiction after 10 years dependence on Ativan, has now called for an internal MCA review.

He has told Mrs Henderson: "As an 80 per cent severely disabled person who has permanent brain, thyroid and central nervous system injuries entirely caused by 10 years of benzodiazepine drug ingestion, legally prescribed by doctors, I find your comments disgusting, pathetic, obscene, cowardly and typical of your profession’s arrogance and lack of humility."

Today he said: "I am asking questions for thousands of people who cannot do it for themselves. "Now I am asking pertinent questions about new issues and potentially revealing questions, they want to shut me up. "I have asked for a review by a senior officer, and if I don't get any joy I will go my MP and ask for the Ombudsman to investigate."

TRANQUILLISER PROBLEMS?

Tranx (Oldham) Support Group

Founder: Barry Haslam

Involuntary tranquilliser addiction causes untold suffering for addicts and their families.

Tranx (Oldham) is a local support group run by ex- and partially withdrawn addicts who have experienced all symptoms of benzodiazepine and other psychiatric drugs, eg Ativan, Valium, Librium, Mogadon, Zopiclone, Seroxat etc.

They know and understand their side-effects.

If you, or anyone you know, needs advice, the group meets at:

Rock Street Resource Centre, Oldham
on Mondays from 10:45am - 12:45pm

If you are unable to make the group meetings contact Barry Haslam on 01457 876355 for advice.

Email Barry Haslam