



ACP-UK CMHN response to closure of antidepressant withdrawal support line

It is with sadness that we read that the only helpline in the country dedicated to supporting people withdrawing from antidepressant medications is to close.

This medication is often the first option offered to people presenting to NHS services with issues around depression. With this in mind, we as a country are in a position that many people (more than 8 million people were prescribed them last year) will at some point need to safely withdraw from this type of medication.

To taper antidepressants safely and effectively, people need clear guidance that is rarely offered. One of our members reports being dismissed when highlighting side effects that left them feeling they might die, only to find out later that this reported side effect was well known and even listed in the literature for this medication. With this type of experience in mind, it is important people have a safe and reliable support to move successfully past a reliance on this type of medication.

In March of this year NHS England said local health services should offer support to people struggling to come off these medications, rather than ALL people receiving information and support when they start this difficult journey. This is further compounded as an issue as doctors have received guidance that recommends a staged approach to withdrawing, but does not state how long this should take or even if there should be any differences for different medications and dosages.

Our concern is that this closure highlights a lack of support for people that is now even less readily available. This lack of support and real guidance can prevent people successfully withdrawing, leaving people feeling they may have relapsed or that it is too difficult. This could push people who could live without this medical intervention into a position that they cannot successfully move on from.

We urge reconsideration of the withdrawal of funding for this service and in an ideal world we would prefer to see this service supported by others.

CMHN Committee