

Knowing your medicines

Millie Kieve Founder/chair of APRIL (Adverse Psychiatric Reactions Information Link)

I was privileged to be a trustee of PAPHYRUS some time ago. I could see that some parents thought if only their child could have accessed treatment, they may not have died. Others suspected that taking or stopping such medication such as Roaccutane, antidepressants and the contraceptive pill may have triggered depression, psychosis or mental turmoil that led to the death of their loved one.

The first group may never know the answer, and the second group, like me, gradually learn that there is too little research into the harms as compared to the benefits of medicines.

Since the death of my daughter Karen in 1995, I have researched psychiatric adverse effects and withdrawal reactions, of medicines and anaesthetics. I founded APRIL charity in 1998.

Among the thousands of emails I have received, 100 were from girls suffering from depression, anxiety, weeping, self harming and suicidal thoughts while taking the anti-androgen, acne drug, Dianette. I reported these experiences to the Committee on Safety of Medicines, now called the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency. The MHRA finally responded by telling me that they 'shared my concerns' and would review Dianette.

An article, in the Guardian on 8 May

led to my receiving a further 55 emails from distressed young women, some had self harmed. One had taken an overdose of paracetamol just 2 weeks before the Guardian article and told me how glad she was to be still here. Never suspecting Dianette was causing her emotional turmoil, she was now hopeful of a path to recovery. In all cases their doctors had insisted the drug was not the cause. Many women and one man had been prescribed antidepressants and beta blockers and had not been told to stop taking Dianette.

Unfortunately, currently most medical schools fail to teach recognition and prevention of adverse drug reactions. Lack of research into why certain drugs can cause depression, psychosis, anorexia, self harming, dementia and suicide may be why this is not covered in medical schools. However, knowledge about the genetic reasons for some people being unable to cope with medicines, is increasing. 7% of Caucasians lack the enzyme CYP 2D6 needed to metabolize 50 of the most commonly prescribed drugs, including Prozac.

Link to Guardian article

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/frontpage/story/0,,1769935,00.html>
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Please note: Members' Meeting and AGM

Where? Headington Hill Hall, Oxford-Brookes University, Oxford.

When? Saturday 14 October 2006.

LETTERS

I had been given your web site details by a friend several months ago, and sadly have just got around to logging on to it.

I must say what a fantastic site with so much valuable information. I have printed off most of the items and shall be pleased to give this information to anyone that I feel it would be useful to.

I have a son myself who is now 26 and has made two attempts to commit suicide. The last 12 years have been horrendous trying to get any help for him and for us, and the worst part of all being that professionals just do not take things seriously. I can relate to several points in the Hindsight Summary Report and find it so frustrating that so many

people are suffering in this way.

One very big example for me was when I attended my son's GP with him after his first attempt. The GP asked my son 'if he had any more thoughts of killing himself' without even taking his eyes off his computer. It had to be seen to be believed. It leaves parents with a huge responsibility for their children's safety when there is no support from others who we feel will know the answers and help us as parents.

I have a lot of contact with parents whose children are using drugs or alcohol and this information will be especially useful to many of them, so thank you for having such a wonderful charity and for MAKING A DIFFERENCE.

Sue H

Suicide/ Self-harm Awareness For Everyone; Directory of Services

A pocket-sized directory was recently launched by the Dumfries and Galloway Choose Life steering group to signpost people experiencing suicidal feeling or feelings of distress or despair to local and national sources of support. The Directory is available from GP practices, leisure centres, cinemas, housing services and many other public places across Dumfries and Galloway.

Feedback from consultation identified a need for an additional resource in a format more suitable for young people and work will soon begin with local young people to develop this.

For further information or a copy of the Directory please telephone Laura Fairbairn on 01387 272731 or email laura.fairbairn@nhs.net

INTERNETCAMPAIGN

UPDATE – PAUL KELLY

PAPHYRUS is in the process of drafting a leaflet aimed at parents, grandparents and carers who may not be as proficient in the use of computers as their children!

The leaflet will recognise the positive benefits of access to the internet but also seek to raise awareness of its inherent dangers; it will give basic advice on internet safety and offer sources of help to anyone who may be concerned that a young person they know is depressed or suicidal.

We are grateful to the **Persula Foundation** who have donated £500 towards the cost of printing the leaflets. We hope the leaflets will be available by September and will be PAPHYRUS's contribution to the World Suicide Prevention Day which is on 10 September.

