

February 2018

## **Petition P-05-784 Prescription drug dependence and withdrawal – recognition and support**

The National Assembly for Wales's Petitions Committee is considering the following petition, which was submitted by Stevie Lewis:

### **Petition text**

*We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to take action to appropriately recognise and effectively support individuals affected and harmed by prescribed drug dependence and withdrawal.*

*This petition has been set up to raise awareness of the plight of individuals in Wales who are affected by dependence on and withdrawal from prescribed antidepressants and benzodiazepines – and specifically to ask the Welsh Government to support the BMA's UK-wide call for action to provide timely and appropriate support for individuals affected.*

*The term "prescription drug dependence" refers specifically to the situation where, having taken their antidepressant or benzodiazepine medication exactly as prescribed by their doctor, patients find they are unable to stop because of the debilitating withdrawal effects. It is important to note here that addiction and dependence are related but different issues. Use of the term addiction implies pleasure seeking behaviour. Reporting of prescription drug dependence in the*



*media continues to allude to "misuse" and "addiction" as if the patient is responsible in some way for their own harm. This is far from the truth. There is no pleasure whatsoever in finding that if you try to reduce or stop your antidepressant, you suffer a wide range of physical and emotional disturbances, that for some people can be life limiting and, tragically, even life ending. Patients need formal acknowledgement, support and guidance to help them through their withdrawal journey and this currently does not exist.*

Further information about the petition and the Committee's consideration of it to date can be found here:

<http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?Ild=19952>

The Committee has agreed to seek the views and experiences of people affected by this issue in Wales. We would be particularly interested in views in relation to the following:

1. Your experience of prescribed drug dependence and withdrawal.
2. What support services are available to people experiencing prescribed drug dependence and withdrawal, particularly in Wales, and whether these are sufficient?
3. The extent to which prescribed drug dependence and withdrawal is a recognised issue amongst health professionals and the general public.
4. Any actions that can be taken to improve the experience of those affected by prescribed drug dependence and withdrawal, including in terms of prevention, management and support.


We would welcome views be sent to [SeneddPetitions@assembly.wales](mailto:SeneddPetitions@assembly.wales) by 16 March 2018.

Responses may be published as part of our Committee papers and discussed at a future Committee meeting. Please let us know as part of your response if you do not want your submission to be published.



If you would like any further information on this petition, please contact the Committee clerking team on 0300 200 6379.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D Rowlands". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David J Rowlands AM  
Chair

