

## Email to Peter Gøtzsche from a patient who gradually stopped her antipsychotic medication against her doctors' advice and got her life and brain back

Footnotes inserted by Peter

17 July 2016

Dear Peter

As a psychiatric user for 15 years, I have followed the drug debate and have always respected you as a debater. Previously I believed that you probably held too firm opinions but that it was good that you brought the subject up for discussion. I spoke briefly with you before the psychiatric summit in 2015<sup>1</sup> expressing my disagreement. At that time I believed you were planting scare stories on medication, since medication is generally the only treatment offered in psychiatry.

For 15 years I have been educated at the psychiatric school where I learned that neurotransmitters are the great sinner. In a way this is nice to know, and then you don't need to hold someone responsible or find reasons. You merely have a chemical defect.<sup>2</sup>

During 2016, however, I have become wiser. At the time of the psychiatric summit, I was gradually reducing a low dose of Seroquel because of severe side effects. I experienced very many withdrawal symptoms and it frightened me a lot<sup>3</sup> ... and I thought that perhaps you were right after all. This led to my decision to gradually stop the use of Abilify, too (against all recommendations from my health care providers).<sup>4 5</sup>

This is the best health decision I have ever made! It turned out that I started feeling much better as the drugs were eliminated from my body. Anxiety that was controlling my life disappeared. I started being able to solve problems by thinking creatively and pragmatically. I've got the energy to make everyday decisions rather than hiding under the blankets in my bed. I can handle what's going on in the world. Now I'm able to create relationships (for example at my job) because I can now speak in long sentences. The psychotic symptoms have evaporated. I can go to a supermarket without panicking. I never thought I could feel this good again. My boyfriend (for the past 20 years) has got his old girlfriend back. I have got my brain back.

Today, I believe that you are ABSOLUTELY right ... I would therefore like to thank you for your firm opinions. And the quote from the summit that has stuck with me was, "therapy cannot always stand alone."<sup>6</sup>

Your struggle for others and for better treatment is an unbelievably uneven and unfair battle but also very, very important!

Thanks for planting the seeds of knowledge last autumn, I will reap the fruits for the rest of my life, and hopefully I will also plant seeds here and there in the course of time.

---

<sup>1</sup> 3 October at Frederiksberg Gymnasium, around 1000 participants.

<sup>2</sup> It is absolutely wrong to claim that psychiatric disorders are caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain.

<sup>3</sup> These withdrawal symptoms can, for example, be symptoms of psychosis, and therefore psychiatrists often increase the dose again, which is one of the reasons why so many patients continue the antipsychotic medication for years or for the rest of their lives causing great harm.

<sup>4</sup> This is unfortunately very typical. It's difficult to get help for slow withdrawal from drugs.

<sup>5</sup> According to The Danish Health Authority's recommendations, you shouldn't take more than one antipsychotic drug at a time, as this increases the harmful effects, including the risk of dying.

<sup>6</sup> At the panel during the summit, I said something like this: Usually psychiatrists say that medicine cannot stand alone. This is the wrong way of looking at it because psychotherapy is what is essential, even for psychoses. We should therefore say: psychotherapy cannot always stand alone.