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David John Rowlands AM
Chair – Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Dear Mr Rowlands

re Prescription drug dependence and withdrawal - recognition and support.

I write to express my support for this petition, which I have already signed.

It will soon be fifty years since my medical graduation. Social Psychiatry and Therapeutic Communities were making huge differences to the way that psychiatric patients were treated at that time, and it was my very good fortune to work with Dr David Clark at Fulbourn Hospital, and Dr Maxwell Jones, at Dingleton Hospital. The concern shown by both men to avoid medication as much as possible, while understanding and optimising a person's milieu had a lasting effect on my approach to mental health.

For more than three decades after my return to join my father in general practice in Maesteg, in 1972, I worked with my partners in practice in an industrial valley, with high morbidity rates, high consultation rates, but without an appointment system. Our prescribing costs and use of anxiolytics and antidepressants were well below the average for Wales. Our practice population was very stable, we declined the very many people who wished to join the practice.

We tried to give people with complex problems more time, rather than more medication.

Since retirement from full time NHS work in 2005, I have continued to work as a part time GP locum.

I undertook Tropical Medicine training before retiring, and have worked, annually, for extended periods, in six developing countries.

I have had extensive experience in homeopathic practice, within the NHS, for 30 years.

My wife and I have provided a free weekly homeopathic clinic for asylum seekers, in Swansea, for five years.

I provide a weekly homeopathic session for Sandville Court self-care centre, near Porthcawl.

I see children who are referred with behaviour problems, ASD, ADHD etc.

I do no private practice, non-NHS patients may donate to African charities.

Because of the great variety of people who consult me, from many different backgrounds and practices, I have an insight into the prescribing habits of doctors over a wide area.

Many of the asylum seekers we see have been put on psychotropics when living temporarily in England.

As a full time GP I was uneasy about the level of psychotropic drug prescribing, in this area, that our LHB reports revealed.

I no longer see those reports, but I do see, regularly, in the above settings, examples of what appear to be over prescription of psychotropic drugs. This causes me huge concern. I also see many patients whose symptoms may, in large or small part, be due to the medications they are taking, for presumed mental health reasons. This applies, to a much lesser extent, to patients on analgesic medication.

It has always proved extremely difficult to enable people to reduce and stop medication that may be doing them more harm than good.

I have great sympathy for doctors in primary care, with busy short appointments. This system encourages quick fix prescriptions in complex cases. Very often this makes for increasing problems in future months and years.

Regardless of any sympathy I might feel, these apparent over-prescribing responses are the makings of a disaster.

This is not an original opinion of mine.

Dr David Healy's books have made the situation very clear., for many years.

Peter Gøtzsche, in "Deadly Pschiatry and Organised Denial" has detailed the enormous harm that results from psychotropic drugs.

No surgeon should operate on a part of the body without knowing it's anatomy, and no one should be allowed to prescribe psychotropic drugs without reading his book.

It is a comment on the enormous power of the pharmaceutical industry, that it can manipulate and suppress informed debate on this subject, so that a petition like this has to be made to the Welsh Assembly, to draw attention to a problem that creates misery, ill health, and deaths, on a huge scale.

We desperately need greater awareness of the extent of prescribed drug dependence, a determination to reduce it, and to offer help to those who suffer from it.

Yours sincerely

Noel Thomas

