

Newcastle upon Tyne
United Kingdom

Dear Baylissa,

I am absolutely overwhelmed by your kindness and that of all the contributors to the magnificent book you sent me – including all those nice people from all over the world who sent testimonials. Words fail me when I try to express my thanks. My eyes were not dry and there was a lump in my throat when I read the book- I was so touched.

THANK YOU!! to all concerned- including the service users of Recovery Road, CITA, Bristol & District Tranquilliser Project, Battle Against Tranquillisers, Camden MIND, Oldham Tranquilliser Project, Lady Caroline Sandwich and the Montagu family.

I feel really humbled by your letter and all those testimonials. I am glad that my work and the 'manual' have apparently helped so many people - far, far more than I ever dreamt of. But I really do not deserve such personal praise or thanks. I must stress that it was the original patients I saw in my clinic who taught me about the effects of benzodiazepines and how to withdraw from them; it was Geraldine Burns who asked me to write about it for users, and who arranged for it to be put in the internet with the help of Rand Bard; it was Ray Nimmo who set up a worldwide benzodiazepine website; it was many people I have never met who voluntarily translated the 'manual' into 11 other languages; and, perhaps most importantly, it is all of you who run tranquilliser support and withdrawal services and who enable them to function who help people most of all. It is you who are continuing, and probably improving on, my initial work. I do not claim to have said the last word on benzodiazepines and hope that one of you will some day write a new and better 'manual'.

Two things that have struck me during my long acquaintance with prescribed, iatrogenically dependent, benzodiazepine users are (1) that they are usually very pleasant, outgoing, sensitive, kind, but often anxious, people and (2) that many of their experiences with the drugs are heartbreakingly tragic. I think it was these characteristics that made their plight so interesting to me and inspired a desire to help, while, for some reason other doctors - my colleagues - felt out of their depth and declined to listen to them. (Perhaps luckily I was too young and naive and keen to learn or unlearn what was taught in medical school). I must also admit that, unlike today's doctors, I had the luxury of an NHS clinic in which an appointment could be for an hour, rather than 10 minutes. I still believe that it is only by listening to patients/clients that one learns.

I thank you all again from the bottom of my heart.

Heather Ashton

May 16 2013