Hello all, I’m printing here an article on the dangers of withdrawal from Benzodiazepines (these include Klonopin, Ativan, Xanax and Valium and the generics of all of those). Please read this info carefully! I’m also sending Tom’s current photo and also his article as a pdf attachment that you can print out and take to  your  support  groups, etc. This information is so important and the problems so dire that I feel it’s vital for everyone with Dystonia to know about it. Again, there is an online support forum  on this at

<http://benzowithdrawal.com/forum/>  I am printing Tom’s article but preceding it with a short and personal story  of my own. Normally I  would not share something this personal with clients, but Tom’s struggle and realization of what what going on opened up an amazing door on my own life to a nightmare that could have been avoided if I’d only known that what I was experiencing was withdrawal  from Ativan. Most of my clients are on one Benzo or another and for years I have encouraged clients to use anything that will give them relief but that doesn’t harm them, not know the terrible effects of the Benzos until now. My Dr. never warned me; has your Dr. warned you? All this will change the way I communicate this subject to future clients and I ask forgiveness from those clients who have heard from me that Klonopin, etc. wasn’t problematic.

Next I want to let you know that within a couple of weeks I’ll  be ready  to launch A NEW CLINIC PROGRAM. It’s a webinar which I’ll be offering initially only  as a review for both in-house clients and long distance clients who have already been in the Clinic program. The cost for this review is $300.00 and I will give a $100 discount to the first in-house client and the first long distance client who enroll!! Here is the webpage for this program,

<http://www.stclinic.com/Index.asp?PG=27>  not  yet available to the general public for new clients. You will see a pdf download for the application which you can fax in or mail or email the info. Again, the first in-house client and the first long distance client who enroll get the review course for $200.

Here is my story, followed by Tom’s.

During the 8 years I suffered with horrible constant S.T. pain and severe twisting of my neck, spine and hips I was taking 8 mg. of Ativan daily and the Dr. never told me anything about the drug and always filled prescriptions without any cautionary warning.  It helped me to sleep and took the edge off the "freaking out" aspect of the suffering but didn't' touch the pain and spasms. During that time I was married to a wonderful man, the love of my life and had two sons. Over a 2 year period I recovered from the symptoms, and at age 50 (I was also going through menopause) decided to get off the Ativan and did it gradually over a 2 year period. About a year or less into that process, I began having insane symptoms, screaming nightmares, panic attacks, waking up at night gasping for breath having to breathe into a paper bag, severe heart palpations to  where I thought I would have a heart attack, very nervous and edgy about everything, generally hysterical and agoraphobic, etc. etc. I thought it was the marriage, and as part of the general insanity divorced the love of my life. Both of my kids went haywire as did my husband and it' a sheer miracle we’re all still alive. For 20 years I've beat myself up, hated myself for doing something so horrible to my family and always thought it was just some kind of breakdown related to menopause. Then as Tom began to zero in on what was going on with him, out of curiosity I did an online search on symptoms of withdrawal from Ativan, and it was like looking in a mirror! For the first time in 20 years I was able to connect the dots. It's been a huge comfort for me to find out what was going on 20 years ago and that I wasn’t crazy, but what a terrible toll it's taken. Meanwhile .. the love of my life remarried - both my boys are grown and doing very well by God's amazing grace and the Clinic was birthed. If I’d only known back then that what was going on was a drug withdrawal, I’d still have my family.

Tom’s Story:

The Dangers of Benzodiazepines

If you are on one or more benzodiazepines (Klonopin, Valium, Librium, Xanax, Ativan, Restoril, etc.) thinking of taking one, or know someone taking one, please read the following. I have had ST since 2001 and thanks to the ST Recovery Clinic, I have recovered extremely well. However, early in my first year with ST when I was in severe pain and disfigurement, I was put on Klonopin for relief, which I am still on to this day. It is beyond me why my doctors so nonchalantly kept me on Klonopin for over 6 years (particularly in light of my continuous reduction in ST symptoms), but it never would have happened had I known the extreme dangers of this drug that I have recently learned about and feel compelled to share. I have to admit that it was also my fault for staying on it for so long, but it had become a way of life that I thought nothing of it and I was never given any indication that long term use would be harmful. While it may seem that I am completely condemning benzos, I want to make it clear that I believe that these meds can do wonderful things for us, but to be very cautious regarding long term use.

Over the past 8-10 months, I have been experiencing symptoms unlike anything I have ever before: This is just a partial list and the severity varies throughout the day:

* My body feels like it is swaying back and forth.  Like I am stuck in cement and my body is heaving
* Feels like I am on a boat bobbing up and down in  the ocean
* Each step feels like I am balancing my foot and  body on an unstable surface- with each step, my leg (and whole body) feels  like it is wobbling as if balancing on a slippery surface like ice.
* The floor looks like it is moving and feels like it  is soft and I am sinking into it. I have to often stand on tip toes to take  some of this feeling away.
* My head often feel like it is not attached to my  body. Feels like it is floating or being pulled off.
* My skin feels like it is dripping off my bones and  I am turning invisible
* Severe muscle weakness as if my arms and legs are  the weight of telephone poles.
* Vertigo and tinnitus
* Any visual or auditory stimuli makes all of these  symptoms worse
* Anxiety and depersonalization, all of which I never  experienced prior to going on Klonopin

Rather than go into the details of what benzodiazepines do to the body from a scientific perspective, and discuss side effects, withdrawal and how to taper off them, I urge anyone on benzos or thinking of going on them to consult this website: <http://www.benzo.org.uk/manual/index.htm> <<http://www.benzo.org.uk/manual/index.htm>> . It is an online manual written by one of the world’s experts on benzos called BENZODIAZEPINES: HOW THEY WORK AND HOW TO WITHDRAW. It is the most comprehensive information I have yet to find on the subject and it has helped me tremendously There is also a fantastic benzodiazepine support group online at [www.benzowithdrawal.com](http://www.benzowithdrawal.com/) <<http://www.benzowithdrawal.com/>> . .

It is unfortunate how little we who take them know about benzodiazepines. Even more unfortunate and amazing is how little our doctor pill pushers understand the true nature of these dangerous meds. The more I learn the more astonished I am at how many lives have been affected. Every single person I know who has taken them for any length of time has been negatively affected by these meds to varying degrees, not to mention those around them. While many suffer uncomfortable side effects from these drugs, the interesting thing is that it is often not the side effects of the medication that are the biggest problem. Rather, because of their addictive quality and the body’s tolerance to them, the biggest issue is typically withdrawal. Some have compared the potency of benzodiazepines to heroine.

Withdrawal does not only affect those who are weaning off these drugs, but those who are taking their prescribed dose. The reason for this is because the body builds up a tolerance and over time, needs more to maintain equilibrium. When more of the drug is not taken, bizarre physical symptoms occur. This is exactly what happened with me. I was taking the prescribed dose and was already in withdrawal without knowing it. So, by incorrectly thinking my symptoms might be caused by my meds, I started to wean off them, when in fact I was already in withdrawal and should have upped my dose to a comfortable level and then begin tapering slowly under proper supervision.

As a result, I spent a year trying to get off my meds on my own thinking they were causing my symptoms, but I was instead going through severe withdrawal and only making things worse by continuing a rapid, unsafe taper. I now have to up dose and start all over again. I shot myself in the foot not knowing the gun was loaded, so to speak, but that is how we learn so I have to look at it as a good thing. I say it is a good thing because had I not seen numerous specialists and gotten extensive testing, and spent thousands of dollars looking for answers, not to mention my frustration with each doctor being unable to help or even give me a glimmer of an idea as to what was wrong, I never would have continued my search and narrowed things down to determine what the real problem was. It really wasn’t until a good friend faxed me an article on benzos that it finally confirmed what was wrong and I was able to move in a direction that provided me with answers.

This was just like what I went through before I figured out I had ST. After many months and many doctors who could not figure out what was wrong with me, I diagnosed myself, not unlike many STr’s have to do. I have to say that it is getting rather tiresome shelling out thousands of dollars to doctors who should be doing this for me. They have hurt me in more ways than they have helped. With this in mind, please be your own health advocate and find a doctor who can be your “partner” in your health care, rather than one who prefers to follow their own agenda without your input. Too many people’s lives are being affected by doctors’ complacency and we need to be the ones to change this. We have to remember that our doctors work for us. Without patients they would not be in business. There are some great ones out there, but we need to be diligent in our efforts to find them.

Now that I am on a safe and proper taper plan, working with a doctor who specializes in addiction medicine (as a partner and not the sole decision maker), I know that I am finally moving in the right direction. I do not know what is in store for me down the road with further withdrawal, but I do know that in the future I will be symptom free and be able to live a normal life without the need for medications. I hope the same for all of you are suffering with the same situation and if you are experiencing strange symptoms that no one understands, please look to your drugs.

Tom Seaman

Wilmington, NC

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Spasmodic Torticollis Recovery Clinic, Inc.

Be encouraged - there's hope!!!!

[http://www.STclinic.com](http://www.stclinic.com/)

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