



[REDACTED]

To the Mental Health Royal Commission,

I run a community facebook page creating awareness about the dangers of antidepressants, I have also been trying to start some class actions for antidepressants in Australia.

In 3.5 years many Australians have reached out to the page for support, these people have either lost loved ones through suicide after taking antidepressants, or been harmed by taking antidepressants themselves.

The community feedback helped to achieve two TGA medication safety updates about antidepressants, as a reminder for doctors and medical professionals to tell their patients and their carers about the risks of all antidepressants, and the suicide risk.

Here are the two safety updates.

<https://www.tga.gov.au/publication-issue/medicines-safety-update-volume-7-number-5-october-december-2016#a2>

<https://www.tga.gov.au/publication-issue/medicines-safety-update-volume-9-number-2-june-2018#a2>

Although I have missed the submission deadline, I thought it was important to send through this information.

In my opinion I don't believe this is happening, I also believe there are many flaws in the warning system regarding these medications.

Most boxes of medications now don't have the product information in them, so if the Doctor or Pharmacist doesn't let the patient know about the risks, they and their family members don't know.

I have been working on trying to get clearer warnings on the boxes of all antidepressants, similar to cigarette packets, then there would be no second guessing.

Most people and some Doctors don't seem to realise how difficult it is to also safely withdraw from antidepressants, some people have to take out granule by granule from the capsule to reduce adverse effects.

It can be dangerous when starting, stopping or changing a dose of antidepressants, there needs to be far more awareness about the dangerous adverse effects, such as suicidal thoughts, suicide, akathisia, serotonin syndrome and safe withdrawal of these medications.

I have attached an example of a warning on a box of antidepressants and also a draft of what I believe are some of the flaws in the warning system.

More awareness of the dangers and safe tapering of antidepressants is really needed, all medical professionals should be fully trained in the bead method and safe tapering of antidepressants.

This alone could save great harm and lives.

Thank you  
Kathy Brown

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# Suicide & Violence Prevention in Australia

## AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATIVE (TGA)

- (TGA) is Australia's medication regulator and monitors the safety of medications and medical devices in Australia.
- Antidepressants and other psychiatric and smoking cessation, asthma medications have been linked to suicide, attempted suicide, violence and other adverse effects, including serious withdrawal effects.
- The TGA should mandate clear warnings on all dangerous medications with all pharmaceutical companies, and police the advertising of antidepressants as treatment. Making sure the risks and dangers of all dangerous medications are clear and concise for the public safety.
- Policing all Doctors that prescribe any dangerous medications, and making sure they are telling their patients about the risks.
- Follow up on serious medication alerts and information, to make sure the public's safety is top priority.
- Take the steps to set up safe tapering programs (knowledge of the bead method), similar to a safe methadone program.
- Some antidepressants and opiates are extremely difficult to stop taking, and more awareness is needed.
- Database of violence, suicides, single car accidents and a record of all medications the living and deceased person was taking at the time.
- New medication warning pamphlets made for Doctors to give to their patients/carers, when their patients are first prescribed any dangerous medications.

## ALL AUSTRALIAN PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES

- All pharmaceutical companies must have clear warnings on the outside of the boxes of all dangerous medications, and clear warnings inside the boxes.
- Currently many medications do not have the product information in the boxes anymore, and if patients and their carers are not told the risks by their Doctor, they do not know the dangers, putting lives at risk.
- Cigarettes have a clear warning and they can't kill you by suicide.

## AHPRA ALL DOCTORS AND HEALTH CARE WORKERS

- AHPRA - Regulating Australia's health practitioners in partnership with the National Boards
- All Doctors and health care workers must tell their patients and their carers about the dangers of medications and the potential suicide risk and adverse effects, new warning pamphlets made to hand to patients.
- There was a medication safety update issued by the TGA in Dec. 2016, as a reminder for Doctors to tell their patients and carers, about the dangers of antidepressants. Many Doctors are still not telling their patients about the risks.
- TGA alert. <https://www.tga.gov.au/publication-issue/medicines-safety-update-volume-7-number-5-october-december-2016>
- Doctors and every health care worker to be fully trained on the safe tapering and withdrawals of antidepressants and other dangerous medications, to reduce adverse effects and suicides.
- Currently Doctors and NPS Medicinewise are advising to taper to fast, causing adverse effects and possible suicides and violence.
- Doctors to look out for adverse effects such as akathisia, and the mimicking of depression/suicidal thoughts caused by the medication the patient is taking. Clearly define, is it the illness or the medication causing harm.

## PHARMACISTS

- All Pharmacists have an up to date database of medications that should not be co-committed to avoid serotonin syndrome and other adverse effects.
- Cross check that patient knows about the risks. If the patient doesn't have information about the adverse effects, make sure the information is handed over and told to read.
- Flashing warning comes up on computer, if two medications that can cause harm are being taken together.

## MENTAL HEALTH FRONTS

- All mental health fronts, such as Beyond Blue, Headspace, Sane, Black dog institute, etc. that advertise and mention antidepressants as a treatment, must make sure there are clear and concise warnings on websites and pamphlets/materials that stand out
- Currently the information is misleading and hard to find on some websites.
- As an example wording on a Headspace pamphlet that says "No deaths have been reported that are attributable to SSRI prescription"

## YOU, YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY

- The public are still not being told about the dangers of antidepressants and other dangerous medications such as common medications such as Champix and Singulair.
- The public is also very unaware of Black box warning medications. Antidepressants carry a black box warning, this is the highest warning classification and means the medication can be life threatening.
- All medications carry risks and benefits, but if suicide, violence and severe withdrawals are side effects, everyone should know about that.

**WARNING**

SSRI ANTIDEPRESSANTS CAN CAUSE SUICIDAL THOUGHTS, SUICIDE, SEROTONIN SYNDROME, VIOLENCE, AKATHISIA, WITHDRAWALS AND OTHER SERIOUS ADVERSE EFFECTS. MAKE SURE YOU AND YOUR CARERS ARE AWARE OF THIS. PLEASE SEE YOUR DOCTOR STRAIGHT AWAY.

**EFEXOR**

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