

SUICIDE

THE BIOLOGICAL REASON FOR SUICIDE WITH ABRUPT OPIOID CESSATION

Just recently a family was awarded \$7 million dollars because a loved one was abruptly cut off from long-standing opioid maintenance for severe pain, and then committed suicide.

Frankly, it's about time the courts recognized the medical hazard of stopping opioids!

For at least the past 20 years any physician who ever took the effort to read a journal or attend a conference had to be aware of the suicide risk if opioids were suddenly discontinued. In the past 2 to 3 years numerous professional and lay publications have highlighted the cut-off risk. Sadly, a pain clinic in Louisville, KY, that should have known better, was the offender in this \$7 million dollar case.

THE FALSE DESTRUCTIVE MYTHS

Too many physicians, pharmacological companies, universities, and government agencies have propagated myths about opioids, IP, and withdrawal risks.

The first myth is that all persons who take opioids are persons of "weak moral character" and don't have a legitimate reason to take opioids.

Second, opioids can just be stopped any old time like antacids and aspirin. (One highly respected university even taught that if there were withdrawal symptoms when a person stopped opioids abruptly that meant the person was just an addict).

Thirdly, neither pain nor opioid affects the biochemicals of the brain.

BIOLOGIC UNDERPINNING OF SUICIDE

It has been well-known for over a generation that suicide is associated with a bona-fide drop in specific brain neurotransmitters. The major neurotransmitter loss which forces suicidal thought is serotonin. Constant pain causes some neurotransmitters like serotonin to decrease, and opioids necessarily reduce neurotransmitters including serotonin.

Withdrawal from opioids must be done slowly to allow the brain to rebuild its serotonin and other neurotransmitters, or a person may succumb to suicide.

HOW TO PREVENT SUICIDE WITH ABRUPT STOPPAGE OF OPIOIDS

If anyone you know, including yourself, is abruptly cut off from opioids, here are our suggestions to prevent suicide:

First, be keenly aware that suicide is a great involuntary (e.g., your mind loses rational control) risk if opioid maintenance is suddenly cut off.

Second, obtain tryptophan and taurine from a health food store. A dose of 1000 mg. every 4-6 hours for 3 days will likely provide enough biochemical ("precursor") support to allow your mind to be rational, to suppress withdrawal symptoms and get help to prevent suicide.

Third, hunt for a physician or nurse practitioner who has a little empathy and who has taken the time and effort to keep up with basic science about pain, opioids, neurotransmitters, and suicide.

ALERT!! Contact your local minister, spiritual advisor, trusted friend or family member, mental health professional, or the nearest suicide helpline if you feel at risk for harming yourself.

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4931 W. Central, Wichita, KS, 67212 Phone: 626-716-2689 Fax: 316-260-4077

E-mail: tennantfoundation92@gmail.com www.arachnoiditishope.com www.intractablepainsyndrome.com

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