

**June 2013**

Dear :

Here's a recap of blog posts and other news from the past month.

You may be interested in this story on AlterNet: [Meet the Doctor Big Pharma Can't Shut Up](#).

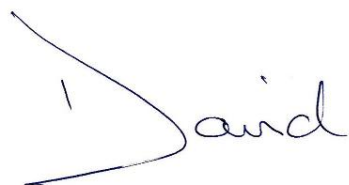
I was also recently on a Russian TV panel (held in English), called [Pharmacated](#), with Josh Bloom and Martha Rosenberg.

Because we believe the best way to understand the impact of drug side effects is to read personal stories, we have added a couple of new features to the RxISK website this month, which you can read about in our press release [RxISK announces new tools to decipher drug company speak](#).

We also recently published a checklist of the [12 questions that can save a patient's life](#) when speaking with their health care professionals about the risks and benefits of prescription medications.

Thank you for your support.

Your feedback, as always, is greatly appreciated.



David Healy, MD

# In the news...

## [RxISK announces new tools to decipher drug company speak](#)

RxISK is adding two enhancements in the first week of June. Researchers will now be able to access patient stories and the official assessment of side effect causality. Narratives shared by patients with their permission and without personal identifiers, will now be available.

## [Know your drug RxISK](#)

RxISK CEO Dr. David Healy talks to radio show host Dr. Lorraine Hurley on prescription drug risk. RxISK Media Relations Officer David Carmichael tells his personal tragic story on prescription drug induced psychosis.

## [Daily Mail Online: What is wrong with randomised trials Part 2](#)

May 5, 2013 By Jerome Burne: Could alcohol get a licence as a drug for depression? How do you test for the safety of a drug that causes the same side effects as the disease it is used to treat?

## [Daily Mail Online: Why randomised controlled trials don't tell you what you want to know](#)

April 28, 2013 By Jerome Burne: Earlier this week the Daily Mail published my feature on side-effects and how patients aren't properly warned about them. Antidepressants, for instance, can cause compulsive heavy drinking but you wouldn't know it from the drug information leaflet.

## [These 12 questions could save your life](#)

The medical team behind RxISK today published a checklist to help patients and their health care professionals assess the risks and benefits of prescription medications.

If your government allows it, your doctor prescribes it, and your pharmacist dispenses it, then it must be safe, right? Not necessarily! This assumption is wrong. People die because of this wrong assumption.



## RxISK stories

### [Suicide on pain killers: John's story](#)

Nearly 20 years ago I put someone on sodium valproate for a mental health problem. She was likely the first person in North Wales put on this drug for this reason. I was the person who knew most ...

### [Suicide is painless: Sylvia's story](#)

In 1962, Sylvia Plath committed suicide a week after going on phenelzine, an antidepressant. She had two young children, making her death close to inexplicable - unless the medication she was put on disturbed the balance of her mind.

### [SoS: Benzodiazepine withdrawal](#)

The first benzodiazepine, Librium, came on the market in 1960, followed three years later by Valium. By the late 1960s the benzos were selling in vast amounts. In the 1970s Valium became the best selling drug on Earth.

### [SoS: Anti-clotting drugs - Fiona's story](#)

Fiona's story (FB) was the first Rxisk story filed. It is reproduced here. Data from FDA's MedWatch system noting withdrawal problems on clopidogrel and Plavix are laid out in the Table at the bottom.

### [SoS: Dopamine Antagonist Withdrawal Syndrome - Carole's story](#)

The last post outlines the horrors of DAWS - dopamine agonist withdrawal syndrome. This week's features the equally grim horror of dopamine antagonist withdrawal syndrome (DAAWS). The dopamine antagonists include the antipsychotic, anti-nausea, anti-itch and other groups of drugs.



## From David's blog...

### [We have a dream: Getting engaged to a doctor](#)

Patient engagement is one of the mantras of current healthcare improvement efforts. Medical students and junior doctors likely think they are doing it better than their elders ever did. They are after all taught communication skills, where an earlier generation

wasn't. In fact, they are taught that they are being taught communication skills. They are taught how to communicate bad news. They are not taught how to hear awkward or bad news.

The younger generation are almost certainly worse than former generations of doctors at listening for or actually hearing, "The

treatment you put me on, doctor, has made me worse."

### When does Yes mean No

On April 10, 2013, in the midst of the Lasagna series of blog posts, an article appeared in The New York Times that attracted a huge amount of interest - mostly outrage. It covered a story about research on premature infants who were being treated with Oxygen to prevent blindness. The key detail was just what had the parents been told about the study - what had they consented to?

### Marilyn's curse

Marilyn died of an overdose of barbiturate sleeping pills. A bystander, Lou Lasagna, noted she had been denied access to a sleeping pill that was safe in overdose, the first pill of any sort that had been proven to work and be safe in an RCT before it was marketed. She was denied by doctors who put more weight on uncontrolled clinical observations than RCT data. As she died, she uttered a curse. Life went on. At first Lou noticed nothing but over the years his horror grew.

### Witty A: Report to the president

Faced with questions about the \$3 billion fine imposed on GSK - is it just the cost of doing business? Andrew Witty snapped back:

*"Although corporate malfeasance cases end up looking very big, they often have their origin in just... one or two people who didn't quite do the right thing. It's not about the big piece. The 100,000 people who work for GSK are just like you, right? I'm sure everybody who reads the BMJ has friends who work for drug companies. They're normal people... Many of them are doctors."*

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