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## February 2023 Newsletter

Welcome to my first newsletter of the year. I've been very interested in mental health for many years and written about various aspects on the subject. I've been reading the excellent book 'The Body Keeps the Score' by American psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk. The book is regarded as one of the best on the understanding and treatment of PTSD. This statement in the book stopped me in my tracks and prompted me to write this newsletter....

“The new generation of antipsychotic drugs are the top selling drugs in the United States...”.

To quote Mind, the UK organisation dedicated to the treatment of mental health.... *Antipsychotics are a type of psychiatric medication which are available on prescription to treat psychosis. They are licensed to treat certain types of mental health problem whose symptoms include psychotic experiences. This includes:*

- *schizophrenia*
- *schizoaffective disorder*
- *some forms of bipolar disorder*
- *severe depression*
- *the psychotic symptoms of a personality disorder*

A class of drugs developed to treat serious psychotic illness is being prescribed for the general population and is the biggest seller, overtaking antidepressants. The US seems to set the trend in medicine as can be seen in the popularity of antidepressants in western nations.

In 1988 Prozac was released for the treatment of psychiatric patients. The basis of the drug is to address a chemical imbalance, serotonin. It revolutionised psychiatry and as we all know became a very popular drug in general practice. I've previously referred to Karen Hitchcock, a respected Australian GP working in private practice and hospitals. It's worth quoting her again...

*There is scant proof in the neurosciences that the theory of chemical imbalance is correct. It is closer to myth than science... The so-called antidepressant drugs have minimal benefit to the average individual that presents to a GP, have multiple side effects (including the possibility of a small increase in the risk of suicide) and are difficult to get off.*

Rather than review this model of chemical imbalance for the general population, the pharmaceutical and medical response in the States is to stick with the model and prescribe an even stronger class of drug with stronger side effects, the antipsychotics. In 2013 Johnson & Johnson paid \$2.2 billion in fines for the improper promotion of one of these antipsychotic drugs (Risperdal) and yet it's still business as usual. In England, the prescription of antipsychotic drugs doubled from 2007 to 2014.

The most disturbing statistic though is the proportion of children and adolescents prescribed antipsychotics in general practice in England doubled between 2000 and 2019. Antipsychotics make children more manageable and less aggressive but also interfere with play, curiosity and motivation and can have side effects of sexual dysfunction and infertility. I don't have figures for England but in the United States children from low-income families are four times as likely to be prescribed antipsychotics as privately insured children. This is ghastly behaviour control, numbing young disadvantaged people to the extent where they are incapable of emotional and sexual maturity.

Thankfully there are clinical psychologists and some psychiatrists within the NHS who practise effective psychotherapy and other strategies that aren't drug dependent. From my own experience, especially treating military veterans over the last three years, I have seen people who are on high doses of medication and still experiencing distressing states of anxiety, depression, mood swings and suicidal feelings. I have the time to listen to people and this can undoubtedly help. Many people have never been properly listened to; being compassionately listened to can of itself be very healing. My experience has been though if I am to make a real difference to the more extreme symptoms, an accurate homeopathic prescription is necessary and can often still be very effective without any change to pharmaceutical medication.

For the past 20 years I have tried to create the opportunity to homeopathically treat psychological conditions on a larger scale than the occasional client in my private practice. The opportunity finally arose just over 3 years ago with the treatment of military veterans at Battling On in Cornwall. An initial 9 month 'trial' was set up. The assessment of the treatment was led by the veterans themselves. At the end of 9 months everybody involved was very happy with the results. Treatment continued with other veterans for a further two and a half years; the project came to completion at the end of last year. I am currently in talks with a much larger charity to continue this work with military veterans. It's an exciting opportunity and I'm very grateful to the funding and support provided by Homeopathy-UK; a wonderful charity. [This work is in addition to my private practice which continues as normal].

It can be very challenging to stay connected to the huge problems in today's world and yet maintain a vitality and love for life. I am very aware I have elaborated on yet another problem. I am fortunate I can actively do something to address this problem in the work I do; albeit in a small way. Feel free to forward this newsletter onto family or friends if you think they may enjoy it or benefit.

It has now been well established especially throughout Covid, that time out in Nature is hugely beneficial for our well-being. I hope you're finding this time for yourselves and enjoying the emerging beauty of Spring.

*With my warm wishes,*

*Ian*