

Letter to Enid Vincent

Your ref: EH/LL449

Altenburg Gardens

18th May 1992

London SW11

Dear Dr Vincent,

Thank you for your letter of the 13th April. There are several inaccuracies in the information you have gleaned. I would like to concentrate on the second paragraph.

Yes, I accept that my prescription was increased at the time of my admission due to my clinical condition. Shortly thereafter, in addition to the daily 800 mg of Largactyl, I was prescribed 80 mg of Droperidol. My registrar, Dr Hillum, had gone away on holiday and the additional dose was recommended by Dr Vince alone on the basis of my 'increased state of agitation', namely opening the ward windows because the internal temperature was about 90°F. It is the unnecessarily large doses and particularly the mixing of these drugs that I object to. I repeat my allegation that in the private sector such practices are considered obscene.

You say there was nothing to suggest my white blood cell count was affected but the relevant blood test showed a level of 77.3% of neutrophils in the total. As my medical notes stated this is 'considerably raised'. It was when the results of that test came through that I was informed by Ray, the duty nurse, that I quote, " your white blood cell count has gone bananas and we are stopping your medication for a day or two". There was never any suggestion that my drugs were stopped because the Droperidol had taken effect.

You say that Dr Gundy prescribes medication in accordance with the British National Formulary guidelines. Although he was

away on holiday for most of my time at Springfield I cannot let such a statement pass. As regards Largactyl, the BNF states that 'up to 1 gram daily may be required in psychoses'.

Dr Gundy admits to giving up to 2 grams daily. Furthermore, the BNF states that 'prescribing of more than one antipsychotic at the same time is not recommended'. I suppose I was lucky to only get two, many patients get a 'polypharmacy' cocktail of 3 or 4 of these drugs.

About your other points, most patients and ex-patients would concur with my views on the lack of love and care shown by the staff, particularly on the acute wards. Naturally there are exceptions and on Bluebell I would nominate Simon Lancaster, Sheila and many of the night staff for praise. As regards smoking in the staff room, the chief perpetrator was Dr Vince and although you say this would be taken seriously I somehow doubt it.

Yours sincerely,

Jamie Summers

Droperidol was withdrawn from use some 10 years later – considered too dangerous to use on horses let alone humans.

Dr Gundy was dismissed from his role as consultant psychiatrist due to alcoholism – one wonders if father and son Vince are still practicing ?