



Withdrawal from Psychiatric Drugs 3 Speaker Bios



Dr Anne Guy

Dr Anne Guy (PsychD) is a psychotherapist in private practice in the UK, having previously worked as a lecturer at the University of Roehampton. She is a member of the Council for Evidence-Based Psychiatry, the secretariat co-ordinator for the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Prescribed Drug Dependence, lead editor for the “Guidance for Psychological Therapists: Enabling Conversations with Clients Taking or Withdrawing from Psychiatric Drugs”, and has co-authored articles on patients’ and therapists’ experiences of psychiatric drugs, and reports for the APPG on current and potential service models for supporting prescribed drug dependence in the UK. She’s a founder member of the Lived and professional Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP) for Prescribed Drug Dependence, connecting people with relevant experience to NHS staff interested in understanding what patients need, and sits on the NHS Advisory Group for the NHSE&I programme considering the implementation of PHE’s recommendations for action on prescribed drug dependence. Prior to training as a therapist, she worked as a senior manager in financial services with a focus on process design and improvement.



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Professor Tony Avery

Professor Avery is National Clinical Director for Prescribing in England. He is also a GP in Nottingham and Professor of Primary Health Care at the University of Nottingham, UK. He was awarded an Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the 2022 New Year's Honours list. He is passionate about ensuring the safe, effective and appropriate use of medicines and has worked in partnership with the pharmacy professions, other healthcare professionals and patients over 30 years to drive forward research and policy development in prescribing and patient safety. He has led a number of major studies investigating the frequency, nature and causes of prescribing safety problems in the NHS. He has also developed effective methods for tackling hazardous prescribing, most notably the pharmacist-led, IT-based intervention called PINCER, which has now been rolled out nationally to general practices in England. In his current National Clinical Director role, he provides clinical leadership for the implementation of the National Overprescribing Review.



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Melanie Davis

Melanie Davis has more than 25 years of experience as the manager of REST (Recovery Experience Sleeping Pills & Tranquillisers). REST offers support, guidance and advocacy for people in Camden and Islington (an area of London, UK) struggling with benzodiazepines and other Z-drugs. Started by Mind in Camden in 1988, the service is now provided by the health and social care charity Change Grow Live.

Through her work with REST, Melanie has supported over 3000 people to safely withdraw from benzodiazepines. Examples of REST's work form part of Public Health England's commissioning framework on prescribed drug dependency, published in March.

Melanie has used her expertise to shape government policy as a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Prescribed Drug Dependency and the Council for Evidence-Based Psychiatry. She was a stakeholder for the 2022 NICE Guideline on 'Medicines associated with dependence or withdrawal symptoms' and subsequently sat on the committee for NICE's patient information leaflet, 'Should I stop my benzodiazepine or Z-drug?'

Melanie now also co-facilitates a peer support group at the Psychotropic Deprescribing Clinic in North East London, an NHS service.



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Jayne Hoyle

Jayne has been manager of the Bristol and District Tranquilliser Project for the past 13 years, supporting people to withdraw from benzodiazepines and other psychiatric drugs. Jayne's background is in healthcare in the UK, she studied in Bristol and London to become a Chartered Psychologist and worked in NHS Primary Care in the Southwest of England.

The Bristol Tranquilliser Project is a registered UK charity that has been helping people successfully withdraw from psychotropic medication since it was founded in 1984.



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June Lovell

June Lovell has been employed by the Health Board in North Wales since 1979; she trained as a Mental Health Nurse and worked in the field of addictions in an inpatient unit and then in the community. In 1978, whilst working within the Substance Misuse Team, referrals to the service were received for people needing support with a range of medications; we began to offer that support on an individual and group work basis.

Trained as a counsellor and supervisor, June recognised the need for a client led approach. June applied for a research grant through Health Promotion Wales to explore the opportunity of setting up a service, which was piloted for one year. As a result of the report findings, the Benzodiazepine Service was created in 1994 with one nurse specialist. The name was later changed to the Prescribed Medication Support Service to recognise the breadth of work and medications. Currently the Service has seven PMSS Specialists, a team of counsellors and administrative/secretarial staff to support the team and also June as the Service Manager. The service has now run for 30 years and currently has 200 clients open to the service.



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Sarah Jones

Sarah Jones is a mental health pharmacist with over fifteen years' experience working in specialist mental health services in Bristol, London and Bath. Since 2000 she has combined her clinical role with teaching undergraduate and postgraduate pharmacists at the University of Bath. Her interests include shared decision making, especially as it applies to decisions to start or stop psychotropic medications. She has been involved in several small projects trying to understand how to better support patients who want to stop antidepressant medication, and is planning to apply for research funding to develop a larger-scale project on this topic during 2024.



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Shama Parkhe

Shama completed her MSc in Clinical Psychology in 2014 and co-founded Hank Nunn Institute together with Anando Chatterji a few months later. Shama has a keen interest in developing alternatives to conventional mental health practices by involving the larger community. She believes that one's cultural and social systems are highly influential in the development of an individual's personality. It is therefore necessary to address the larger community and not just the individual in isolation. Shama also believes in collaborating with the service user community in designing supportive spaces which enable their journey of self discovery.

For the past 6 years, she has been working with individuals experiencing personality difficulties in an individual and group setting using both psychodrama and group analysis. In addition, she also offers training & clinical supervision to students and young professionals. She believes in the efficacy of group processes and aims at creating safe, reflective, and therapeutic spaces for groups of people experiencing interpersonal difficulties. She is a certified Psychodrama Therapist. She is also a staff member of the International Living Learning Experience (INLLE) residential workshops. At present, she is training to qualify as a Group Analyst.



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Anando Chatterji

Anando's interest in the complexities of human existence peaked with his study of philosophy. He worked at Athma Shakti Vidyalaya, a residential community for people with severe psychological distress, as a staff member for 14 years and was the community lead for the Community of Communities, UK, peer review for 5 cycles. His desire to build therapeutic communities, led to him co-founding Hank Nunn Institute along with Shama Parkhe. His interest lies in co-creating therapeutic practices together with service users. He believes there is no therapy without change and no change without social change. Anando has been an individual and group psychotherapist for over 20 years now. Working with adults with personality difficulties/disorders is of particular interest to him. He is fascinated with the complexity and diversity of thought and experience that a group brings. He is the coordinator for IGA, UK accredited Group Analysis Training in India. He is also a staff member of the International Living Learning Experience workshops, and a supervisor for the Therapeutic Environments Practitioners Training, UK.



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Pratiksha Tewari

After completing her Masters in Applied Psychology from TISS Mumbai, with a focus on family and relationship counselling, she has worked with child rights and mental health organisations. She is also a certified Queer Affirmative Counsellor. Her interest lies in bringing mental health to the forefront in daily conversations and facilitating spaces that encourage free expression of people's stories. When not learning more about her work or herself, she can be found passionately arguing about the correct lyrics to Bollywood songs, figuring out how to incorporate more colours into her wardrobe, or planning her next food walk.



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Dr Ellen Van Leeuwen

Ellen Van Leeuwen is a GP and Clinical Pharmacologist. She works at Ghent University (Belgium) and is involved in pharmacotherapy education for medical students, and research in deprescribing and appropriate use of psychotropics. She defended her PhD “deprescribing psychotropics in primary care” with a focus on long-term antidepressants use in 2022. She was the lead author of a Cochrane review on stopping antidepressants and has conducted qualitative research on stopping antidepressant with patients, GPs and other health care professionals.



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Karin Jervert

Karin Jervert is an artist, author and psychiatric survivor. She is the Arts Editor at Mad in America. Certified in eCPR and Personal Medicine, her artwork includes essays, visual art, graphic narratives, and poetry and explores nature and the power of creative expression to transform trauma - particularly trauma experienced as a result of forced psychiatric treatment. Her study of Buddhism and improvisational comedy find their way into her work as well. Purchase her book of poetry 'In Water Not Blood' [here](#).