



Dying for a Cure: A Memoir of Antidepressants, Misdiagnosis and Madness

Rebekah Beddoe

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A powerful memoir of antidepressants, misdiagnosis and madness.

There was that term again, depression, being tossed around. When had I received an official diagnosis, anyway? It had just been mentioned by my GP and now staff were picking it up and running with it. Things seemed to be getting blown out of proportion.

I wanted to know why I couldn't be tested for this so-called imbalance in my brain before being put on medication, but I didn't want him to think I was questioning his expertise. He was the second doctor now to recommend the treatment. "And these are the newer sort - the ones that aren't addictive or anything?" "Not addictive. They're very safe."

Shortly after the birth of her daughter Rebekah Beddoe was diagnosed with post-natal depression. Two years later she was taking six different drugs, including lithium, a tranquilliser, an antipsychotic, and antidepressants. She had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder; given electric-shock therapy; made numerous attempts on her life; and was alternately manic and consumed by crippling despair during which she could barely move. She had a two-year-old daughter she hardly knew and a mother and partner who were at their wits' end, unable to recognise the formerly ambitious, vibrant and highly successful woman they loved.

Australians have embraced antidepressants: twelve million prescriptions are written annually, mostly by GPs. But, what do we really know of the pills' effects? The idea that they correct a chemical imbalance in our brain is by no means proven - there is much evidence that contradicts this view. It is commonly thought such drugs are not addictive; in fact - as Rebekah found to her great distress - they are hard to come off and those who do may suffer debilitating side effects.

This is a powerful memoir of the nightmarish three years Rebekah endured as she was repeatedly misdiagnosed, only to realise that her medication was the cause of her mental deterioration. Rebekah calls for better information from the pharmaceutical companies about the risks associated with antidepressants and similar classes of drugs - facts, rather than marketing dressed up as medical science - and for a re-examination of the ways some psychiatrists treat their patients.

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