

PE1463/AAAAA

Catherine McAdam submission of 16 June 2019

This whole issue is largely one of health inequality for women as they make up the vast majority of sufferers. However it should be noted that men and children can also be profoundly affected. Thyroid disease affects health and well-being, both physical and mental, and can reduce the ability to contribute to society and the economy. The treatment in Scotland for many patients, particularly those with an underactive thyroid, is less than ideal and must be addressed as a matter of priority.

At least 10% of those with an under active thyroid are known to 'not do well' on the standard treatment regime, yet they are very seldom offered any alternative treatment, although alternatives exist and have been seen to be effective. What is the medical solution for them?

The blood tests for hypothyroidism do not give a full picture of thyroid hormone function, hence many sufferers are deemed 'borderline', are undertreated or may remain undiagnosed- Is this acceptable in 21st century Scotland?

I was diagnosed out of the blue in 2008. Given a prescription of Levothyroxine I thought this was a 'cure'. I was so relieved that the symptoms of no energy, tiredness, rapid weight gain, anxiety and depression and a few others were going to be gone as I started my levothyroxine treatment.

How deluded I was, I felt a little better when I started the treatment and slowly my GP increased my dose. However I was never free from the lack of energy, a tiredness that could see me sleep for 12 hours and yet still awake unrefreshed and looking forward to yet another early night. My social life took a massive down turn, I had no energy or motivation to socialise with family or friends. This did nothing to help with the depression and isolation I was feeling. I was letting people down, I couldn't concentrate at work or at home. I genuinely thought my life would never get better and that I'd end up in a nursing home.

Every time I went to my GP to talk about symptoms I was pretty much told they weren't connected to my hypothyroidism and that my 'levels' were fine. It made me feel like I was being a burden on the GP and they were not listening and felt my symptoms were not connected. I went from my Levothyroxine being increased to decreased to increased again, it was a never ending process.

Skip forward to around 2013/14 and I was so desperate that after carrying out some online research I ordered natural desiccated thyroid over the internet. The package came and I barely hesitated to start taking the pills, as I felt I had nothing to lose, my life was meaningless and I felt helpless at that time. I can't remember how long it took but I suddenly realised whilst walking into work one day that I was walking fairly quickly, then I realised one morning that I was singing along to the radio, I also noticed I started to lose weight.

I guess I was lucky that the particular type of NDT that I ordered was a good match for me, thinking back it could have gone so wrong when I stopped taking the Levothyroxine and took that leap of faith based on my own research.

I would like to think that GP's would have the patients interest at the heart of their treatment, however they are bound by the restrictions in this country and tied by their surgery's 'deal' with pharmaceutical companies who offer attractive incentives for prescribing medications such as Levothyroxine.

From my own personal perspective, I would urge that GP's be allowed to look at more natural treatments, as the benefits of these could be less expensive and more conducive to better treatment of hypothyroidism.