

PAXIL ON TRIAL

Evidence supporting the claim that Paxil caused my homicidal psychotic episode

David Carmichael

In July 2003, at the age of 45, I experienced my first major depression. I started taking 40mg. of the SSRI (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor) antidepressant Paxil a day. By September, I was feeling mentally healthy again. After forgetting to take Paxil for a few days in February 2004, I weaned myself off the drug. I started to feel depressed again in July. My symptoms included insomnia, increased anxiety, rapid weight loss, low concentration, and a lack of energy. I put myself back on 40mg. of Paxil a day.

A few days after I started taking Paxil again, I was having suicidal thoughts. I thought I could get rid of the thoughts and recover more quickly if I increased my dosage. On July 16, I started taking 60mg. of Paxil a day. Three days later, I planned my suicide. I went from planning my suicide to planning a murder-suicide to planning a murder. On July 31, 2004, I killed my 11-year-old son Ian. I was charged with first-degree murder.

In November 2004, I was diagnosed by Dr. John Bradford, head of forensic psychiatry at the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre, as being in a "major depression" with "psychotic episodes" when I killed Ian. In May 2005, his assessment was supported by Dr. Stephen Hucker, a forensic psychiatrist from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health that the crown attorney hired. On September 30, 2005, I was judged to be "not criminally responsible on account of a mental disorder" for murdering Ian and sent to Brockville Mental Health Centre. I received an absolute discharge from the Ontario Review Board on December 4, 2009.

On October 5, 2011, I filed a lawsuit against GlaxoSmithKline, the manufacturer of Paxil, claiming that my homicidal psychotic episode was Paxil-induced and not caused by a mental disorder.

GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) has denied any possibility that Paxil caused my homicidal psychotic episode in the following media statements:

- London Free Press, 2006 - David Carmichael's case is certainly a terrible tragedy, however, we do not believe that Paxil played any part in this situation. Paxil did not trigger Carmichael's actions.
- BBC Panorama, 2017 - David Carmichael's case is clearly a tragedy but medicines like Paroxetine (Paxil) have helped many people. Patient safety is our priority and there is no scientific evidence that Paroxetine causes homicidal, psychotic or violent behaviour.
- The Dr. Oz Show, 2018 - Mr. Carmichael's case is clearly a tragedy but medicines like this are an important option for treating depression. Patient safety is our priority and there is no scientific evidence that this medication causes homicidal, psychotic or violent behavior. We continue to monitor its safety and make our research available.

GSK DATA CONTRADICTING MEDIA STATEMENTS

Information in 2014 Product Monograph for Paxil produced by GSK Canada:

- Psychosis is a rare side effect. There are clinical trial and post-marketing reports with SSRIs and other newer antidepressants, in both pediatrics and adults, of severe agitation-type adverse events coupled with self-harm or harm to others. The agitation-type events include: akathisia, agitation, disinhibition, emotional lability, hostility, aggression, and depersonalization.

Information in 2012 Product Label for Paxil produced by GSK USA:

- May increase suicidal thoughts or actions in some children, teenagers or young adults within the first few months of treatment or when the dose is changed. Anxiety, agitation, panic irritability, aggressiveness, impulsivity, akathisia (psychomotor restlessness), hypomania, mania, and hostility (includes homicidal and violent behaviour based on external analyses of data) have been reported in adult and pediatric patients.

EVIDENCE SUPPORTING CLAIM PAXIL CAUSED MY HOMICIDAL PSYCHOTIC EPISODE

No mental illness during formal educational years:

- Graduated grade 13 from Newtonbrook Secondary School in Toronto, Ontario in 1977 and was athlete of the year.
- Spent summer holidays during high school and university working with children at Swallowdale Camp in Huntsville, Ontario; counsellor from 1976 to 1978 and program director from 1979 to 1985.
- Completed undergraduate degree in physical education with an advanced coaching certificate from York University in Toronto, Ontario in 1982, competed on varsity track and field and wrestling teams and was president of the Men's Interuniversity Athletic Council from 1980 to 1982.
- Complete masters degree in physical education with a specialization in the physiology and psychology of coaching from York University in 1985.

No mental illness during 18 year career:

- 1985 to 1987 - development officer for Western Australian Amateur Wrestling Association.
- 1987 to 1989 - high performance director at Ontario Amateur Wrestling Association.
- 1989 to 1998 - director of research and development at Ontario Physical and Health Education Association.
- 1998 to 2001 - director of national projects at ParticipACTION.
- 2001 to 2003 - consultant in sport, recreation and fitness sectors.

First diagnosed with a mental illness (major depression) in July 2003 and I took Ian's life in July 2004.

No mental illness since 2005:

- No indication of psychosis when I was assessed by forensic psychiatrists in November 2004 at Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre for my criminal trial.
- Major depression was in remission when I arrived at Brockville Mental Health Centre (BMHC) in October 2005 after my criminal trial.
- Not diagnosed with a mental illness by forensic psychiatrists at BMHC between October 2005 and when I received an absolute discharge in December 2009.
- Have not been treated for a mental illness since September 2010; I have not taken any psychiatric drugs, participated in talk therapy or taken nutritional supplements, and I have not exercised more than once a week.

Loving father:

- Daughter Gillian - my dad spent a lot of time with Ian and I when we were young. He encouraged us when we tried new things and I always felt safe and protected when I was with him. There was never any indication that my dad could harm anyone. He is a loving and caring father who I really enjoy spending time with.
- Wife Elizabeth - David was a loving, nurturing and supportive father to Ian. One example of his support is when Ian and Gillian developed a strong interest in BMX bike riding, he had a half-pipe constructed in our backyard which, along with a trampoline, climbing wall and tetherball court, turned it into a popular neighbourhood playground.

Expert opinions:

- Dr. Selma Eikelenboom, forensic medical examiner, Colorado, USA (2016 DNA test results) - pharmacogenetic test results identify several cytochrome P450 polymorphisms which affect metabolism.
- Dr. Peter Breggin, psychiatrist, New York, USA (2007 interview with CTV W5) - Carmichael started the drug again less than three weeks before he kills his child. And what we find is that it's that initial few weeks when the drug has the most impact; when it's either increased in dose, decreased in dose or stopped. It looks (like David Carmichael's psychosis is) directly related (to Paxil).
- Dr. David Healy, psychiatrist, psychopharmacologist and professor of psychiatry, Bangor University, Wales, UK (2018 report on fraudulent concealment for lawsuit against GSK) - There was almost nothing (in 2003 and 2004) to indicate the hazards to a person like David Carmichael or to his doctor. Quite the contrary, there was a vigorous campaign to hide the risks and avoid warning doctors of the need to monitor patients and to avoid alerting patients to the need to be monitored. My opinion is that Paxil can cause even perfectly normal people to become homicidal. It is also my opinion that but for his intake of Paxil Mr. Carmichael would not have killed his son, Ian.