

# 12<sup>th</sup> Nursing and Healthcare Congress

October 03-05, 2016 Vancouver, Canada



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## Understanding the impact of antipsychotic medication and associated side effects on peoples' lives

Antipsychotic medication plays an important role in the treatment of people experiencing severe mental health problems. However, antipsychotic medication often produces troubling side effects. Severe side effects commonly occur, and include Parkinsonism, akathisia, tardive dyskinesia, and substantial metabolic effects. Less severe side effects include sedation, insomnia, sexual dysfunction, dry mouth, constipation, urinary problems, and dizziness. Many consumers experience numerous side effects concurrently, which can be more debilitating than the symptoms of severe mental illness. Understanding consumers lived experience of antipsychotic medication side effects could enable health professionals to work more closely with consumers and informal carers to manage adverse effects. This paper draws on the findings of three studies, in which in-depth interviews were conducted with 18 informal carers, 10 mental health consumers, and 9 case managers. The transcribed interviews were examined by using content analysis. This resulted in a series of rich, diverse themes that detailed key issues such as: nurses' lack of knowledge about antipsychotic medication side effects; the belief that a lack of consumer insight was responsible for non-adherence; and a lack of systematic approach to the assessment of side effects. In contrast consumers emphasized the "zombie" like state they had to live with; and how they used varied management strategies to limit the impact of the side effects on their lives. The differing perspectives explored will provide a more in-depth understanding of the lives of consumers and carers and highlight significant challenges for nurses and other health professionals in caring for people who take antipsychotic medication.

### Biography

Paul Morrison completed studies in nursing, psychology, education and counselling and has a long-standing interest in mental health issues and the education of health professionals. Before taking up his present position at Murdoch University, he worked in a range of health care settings as a general and mental health nurse (UK and Queensland); in universities as a lecturer, senior lecturer (Cardiff), Associate Professor (Brisbane) and Professor (Canberra & Perth) and in private practice as a psychologist. He is an experienced teacher, researcher, practitioner and writer with over 100 publications. Some of his books have been translated into German, Norwegian and Indonesian.

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