

MP Joins Local Health Activist to Lobby Minister

Broxbourne MP, Charles Walker, was recently joined by Hoddesdon health campaigner Janice Simmons, National Co-ordinator of the Seroxat User Group, for an hour long meeting with the Public Health Minister to discuss measures to monitor and control the use of anti-depressant drugs.

Speaking from London after the meeting Mr Walker said: “Janice Simmons approached me days after my election last May to raise her concerns about the prescribing of anti-depressant drugs. I was immediately impressed by her knowledge of the subject and the national and international support her campaign has attracted. While it is clear that these drugs allow many people to live tolerable lives, I am increasingly concerned that they are being oversubscribed.

“During our meeting with Jane Kennedy MP, the Public Health Minister, Janice and her colleagues highlighted the need for doctors to provide more information about the side-effects of SSRIs and the difficulties that some patients face when withdrawing from the treatment. The Minister listened intently and made it clear that the Government was taking these concerns seriously. Having repeatedly raised this matter in the House of Commons, I will continue to use my position in Parliament to press for action on this and other issues relating to mental health.”

Speaking to the Mercury, Janice Simmons said: “Meeting with the Minister is another step forward in our campaign. The Seroxat User Group is determined to ensure that patients are fully informed about the side-effects of SSRIs and that GPs only prescribe them as a last resort. In addition, we made clear our deep disquiet about these drugs being used to treat depression and other illnesses in adolescents. The Minister and her officials certainly seemed receptive to our concerns and were happy to let the meeting run beyond the scheduled close. We await her letter summarising our discussion and the actions she will be taking with interest.”

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