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Drug group campaigner to meet PM

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Prime Minister Gordon Brown is to meet a woman from Huntingdon, who has been campaigning for five years to highlight potential problems with anti-depressants.

Janice Simmons set up the Seroxat User Group in 2002 after discovering that her second husband Jon was addicted to the drug.

Since then thousands of people have contacted her website and the group has provided information to people from all over the world.

Mrs Simmons, 58, a grandmother from Great Stukeley, will travel to Downing Street tomorrow (Thursday), accompanied by Huntingdon MP Jonathan Djanogly and Dr Paul Duckett, from Manchester University.

She told The Hunts Post: "I never believed we would get this far. Our MP, Jonathan Djanogly, wrote to Tony Blair in July and we received the invite last week."

Mrs Simmons said there is a long list of demands on their shopping list and her group wants:

- * To know why - four years since it started - the investigation into GlaxoSmithKline is still ongoing. The MHRA, (the Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Agency, the body that regulates medicines), is investigating an allegation that GSK withheld information on Seroxat having a higher suicide risk for under 18s. GSK denies this, saying Seroxat was never licensed for children.
- * Why a recommendation from a Health Select Committee report in 2005 - which said that the MHRA should become an independent body - has not been implemented.
- * The group wants the MHRA to look at independent information about particular drugs - rather than accept information from drug companies.
- * Better enforcement of guidelines from NICE (the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence) which state that anti-depressants should not be used as a first-line treatment for mild depression.
- * The user group says information from its members indicates that many GPs have not heard of the MHRA or the Yellow Card warning system. This is a yellow card doctors and patients are advised to complete to report the side effects of the drugs.

Mrs Simmons set up the group after seeing the addiction of her husband.

Six years before they met, Jon and his first wife were prescribed anti-depressants when their marriage broke down. Jon's wife committed suicide within three weeks of being put on Prozac while 16 years on, Jon is still dependant on anti-depressants.

The Seroxat User Group will also remind Mr Brown that more support groups and funding are needed to help patients trying to withdraw from anti-depressants.

INFORMATION: Contact The Seroxat User Group on www.seroxatusergroup.org.uk e-mail janice@seroxatusergroup.org.uk

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