

Widow claims father-of-two was driven to suicide by 'quit smoking' drug

A widow claimed yesterday that a drug designed to help smokers quit may have played a role in her husband's suicide.

Father-of-two Wayne Marshall, 36, was found hanged shortly after completing a 13-week course of Champix, which it is feared may have depressive side effects.

His death is the second in the UK to be linked to the newly-licensed drug.

Mr Marshall's widow Emma said he was prescribed the drug by his GP last August to help him quit his 20-a-day habit, but quickly went downhill, cutting himself off from his family and friends.

Mr Marshall, a welder, from Rossington near Doncaster, died in November. Last month, an inquest in Doncaster recorded a verdict that he killed himself.

Mrs Marshall, 28, said she believed the drug had played a part in his death and has reported the case to the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency.

"I don't want anybody to go through what myself, his children and his family and friends are facing," she said. "It is horrendous.

"People need to think about going on this drug, particularly if they have a history of depression.'

After her husband's inquest, Mrs Marshall, a distribution coordinator, discovered Champix has been linked to depression.

Mrs Marshall, who said her husband had once before attempted suicide when he was a teenager, had moved out of the couple's home a month before the tragedy.

His previous attempts to give up smoking had failed, but he did not smoke while taking Champix. He became quiet and withdrawn, however, and one day she found him sobbing uncontrollably.

"I don't understand how he went downhill so quickly," she said. "He was not the type of person who needed picking up but his whole personality changed. He closed himself off completely from everybody.

"These tablets did seem to be working. It was just his moods."

He had finished the drug course a week before she last saw him, but had started smoking immediately.

"He was more positive than when I saw him previously," she said. "Never ever could I have dreamt he would have done something like that."

Last October, TV editor Omer Jama, 39, was found dead at his home in Bolton.

He slashed his wrists weeks after starting a course of Champix. Mr Jama had just booked a foreign holiday and had no history of depression.

The European Medicines Agency last month ordered improved warnings to patients over the twice-daily prescription medicine following reports it could lead to depression.

Figures from the MHRA show one patient has taken his life while on the drug, two others have attempted suicide and there have been 60 other "suicidal-type suspected adverse reactions" reported.

About 200,000 patients have been prescribed the drug in the UK since December 2006 and it was approved by the Health Service last July.

An MHRA spokesman said Champix, which is made by Pfizer, was being closely monitored. He said: "Giving up smoking can be very stressful. The side effects are suspected. It does not necessarily mean the drugs caused the reaction."

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