

9.134 Review of 'Too many pills. How too much medicine is endangering our health, and what we can do about it.'

By Dr James le Fanu, published 2018 by Little, Brown, ISBN978-1-4087-0977-1, 303 pages, price £13.99.

By John Kapp, johnkapp@btinternet.com, www.reginaldkapp.org. (my *emphasis*) 15.8.18

Personal testimonies to this London GP tell of: (back cover) 'being coerced into talking drugs which they do not need, debilitated by their adverse effects – and their almost miraculous recovery on discontinuing them.' He recommends patients to ask much more searching questions about the *benefits and risks* of the medicines they are taking.

He writes (p 1) 'In just fifteen years the number of prescriptions issued by family doctors in Britain has increased *three-fold*. (This increases at 7%pa compound, and 1.1 bn monthly prescriptions were written in 2017, so now 2 drugs are being prescribed continuously for every man, woman and child in the country) Everyone agrees that this is too many – a regular topic of conversation down at the pub, on the golf course and the bowling green. Some are apprehensive about even visiting the surgery lest they be burdened by taking yet more drugs. Dutiful children visiting their parents are *aghast* at the *six, eight or ten* different types of pill cluttering up the bathroom cabinet'. (Now costing us taxpayers nearly £20 bnpa)

'Doctors themselves recognise the problem with *nine* out of *ten* GPs in a straw poll acknowledging that they prescribe 'too many pills'..... (p 2) 'There is no drug intended to do good that does not do *harm* in some. And the more that are taken the greater the *chances* of harm. Over the past 10 years, thousands of readers of my weekly medical column have written to tell me of the misery of the muscular aches and pains, lethargy, insomnia, impaired concentration, gut disturbance and general decrepitude caused by their drugs – and the almost miraculous *recovery* on discontinuing them'.

'The adverse consequences of polypharmacy (literally many pills) are *vastly greater* than is commonly appreciated, being responsible for a remarkable 75% increase in the numbers requiring admission for adverse drug reactions. And polypharmacy can also be fatal, almost certainly a contributory factor to the recently observed *decline* in life expectancy – *600 more* people dying every *week* in 2015 compared to previous years.'

(p210) 'It makes no sense at all to take a drug intended to *prevent* some medical condition in the future, if it is causing you *problems now*.' Yet the pharmaceutical industry had other ideas, (p 24) 'the future prosperity entailed moving beyond the development of drugs to combat disease, by creating a market where they could *sell to everyone* – targeting the hundreds of millions of the apparently well and healthy, persuading them (and indeed their doctors) that they *had some medical condition warranting treatment*. The most obvious way this might be achieved was to re-designate previously 'normal' physiologically variables as '*abnormal*', widening the net of those requiring *lifelong* medication with blood pressure and cholesterol lowering drugs.'

For example, the old rule of thumb for high blood pressure recognised that it naturally increases with age, so was: (p197) '100 plus the patient's age - which for someone aged 80 was a seemingly alarming 180. However, in the early 1990s this rule of thumb was rudely *overturned*.....to the current threshold of *150/80*. He also exposes the damning verdict of metastudies of the 5 pillars of polypharmacy (p208),

1 Hypertension: This review found that compared to a placebo, an antihypertensive drug did **not reduce any outcome** including total mortality, total cardiovascular events, coronary heart disease or stroke.

2. 'Raised Cholesterol. Statin therapy in those at low risk **does not reduce** overall mortality or serious illness, with an **increased risk** of causing side effects from minor and reversible to **serious and irreversible**.

3 Diabetes. A low carbohydrate diet resulted in substantial weight loss in all patients and brought about normalisation of blood glucose. Seven patients were able to come off medication. (see also below)

4 Osteoporosis. Drug treatment can achieve at best a marginal reduction in hip fractures, at the cost of **serious medical adverse effects** and forgone opportunities to have a great impact on the health of older people.

5. Cardiac cocktail. It is important to challenge the assumption that the efficacy and safety of drugs given in the relatively short term remain the same over the long term.' (p 250) 'And then there is the possibility, illustrated by Prof Julian's near-death experiences, that beta blockers previously tolerated, can become with time dramatically less so, producing a potentially fatal slowing of the heart rate, and a precipitous fall in blood pressure on exertion.'

(P130,131) 'The defining feature of their illness (diabetes) being carbohydrate intolerance. And so it has been ever since that those with diabetes, encouraged to **include** starch carbohydrate foods (bread, pasta, potatoes, noodles, rice and cereals) at each meal, have **struggled** to lose weight and lower their levels of blood sugar, relying instead, as those experts recommended thirty years ago, on **drugs** to do so. This.... accounts for the **four fold** increase in type II diabetes over the past twenty five years - an **iatogenic catastrophe** of epic proportions.' Wikipedia says that 8.3% of the world's population had it in 2015, and 90% have type II, for which: 'the most common cause is excessive weight, and insufficient exercise...Prevention and treatment involve maintaining a healthy diet, and regular physical exercise, a normal body weight, and avoiding use of tobacco.'

This courageous book exposes the scandalous way that drug companies have betrayed the trust of doctors in prescribing fake remedies, and have conned governments to finance them at us taxpayers' expense. I am also inspired by the patients James quotes who recovered their previous good health with the courage to take themselves off pills scare mongeringly prescribed, which reminded me of the line: 'keep tight hold of nurse, for fear of finding something worse.'