

My name is Carissa Kerber. I am 20 years old. I am currently a full-time student at Portland Community College with a 3.8 grade point average. I also volunteer 2 days a week at NAMI of Washington County with young adults and youth. I have multiple mental health diagnoses, including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Bipolar Disorder and Psychotic Symptoms NOS (Not Otherwise Specified) that include auditory, visual and tactile hallucinations. I am here today to tell you about something that may seem like a small thing but led to horrible consequences for me.

On January 9th I had a "check-in" appointment with my psychiatrist to get refills for prescriptions I have been taking for over a year. I take two separate dose of generic Seroquel; 400 mg at night and 25 mg three times during the day. Getting the 400 mg pills was no problem, however getting the 25 mg pills that I take 3 times daily was. I followed up with my mental health provider on January 15th to make sure the prior authorization was filled out for the 25 mg strength and was assured that it was. On January 15<sup>th</sup>, I ran out of the 25 mg tablets and asked for help getting a hold of my insurance company to find out why the approval had not gone through. Previously, the approval had been received in 24 hours or less. I called the number given but the number was for providers only, so they couldn't tell me anything.

Some of the problems I experienced due to not having my medication for two days included increased hallucinations, hyperactivity with poor attention span, increased irritability, and being unable to stop talking and moving. On January 21<sup>st</sup>, I talk to my doctor, who suggested that for the time being I should get the 100 mg tablet and cut it in half, taking 50mg twice daily. After two days with no daytime medication, I agreed to take the higher dose.

While on the higher dose, I experienced depressed mood, involuntary muscle movement in my arms, legs and neck/head, increased anxiety, poor concentration, difficulty completing school work, increased frequency of headaches, increased irritability, and decreased motivation. It was very embarrassing when several people mentioned to me they were concerned because "the lights were on but nobody was home." One of the kids I work with in Youth Group told me he was uncomfortable around me because my head was constantly moving and I could not stop it. Normally, I am very independent and it was hard to ask for help. But because of the medication increase, I had difficult cutting pills and needed someone to attend my next doctor's appointment with me to help explain what the medication at the increased dose was doing to me.

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, I had a doctor's appointment to discuss options. My doctor was able to give me a coupon to deduce the cost of the 25mg tablets so I could return to the dose that works for me while I wait for approval from insurance. I had to pay out of pocket for the medication. My only source of income is Social Security Disability and I am not able to afford to pay for this medication monthly. I am hoping my approval goes through so I can stay on the medication that works for me. I have goals and am working towards those. I need the right medication in the right dose to be healthy enough to reach those goals.