

The Women with Red Umbrellas

We are among 3000 Canadians who use a high potency vitamin and mineral supplement for the treatment of Bipolar Affective Disorder.

The supplement, called Empowerplus has allowed us or a loved one to completely control the symptoms of manic depression and has facilitated a return to a normal, healthy life. All without the well-documented side effects of psychotropic drugs. Many of us have resolved our illness with Empowerplus while under the supervision of our doctors.

When researchers started publishing promising preliminary studies in well known medical journals. Health Canada determined that since the supplement was effective, it was now a drug. Health Canada suppressed further research by shutting down a large double blinded, placebo controlled study at a major university and demanded that all patients in the study go back on their drug treatments. Health Canada then decided to protect us by restricting access to the supplement, turning our shipments back at the US border.

When we called to ask why, we were transferred to a crisis line, scripted to tell us that we are mentally ill, that our vitamins are an illegal drug and that when we ran out, we would need to go back to the hospital for care. Health Canada determined, without meeting us, that we were too sick to talk to and not important enough to give real answers to.

We decided that they needed to see us in order to understand that we are no longer ill. We decided to put a new face on mental illness in Canada.

On June 11, 2003 we took our place at the Parliamentary entrance. We could not be there as a demonstration, so we stood as Canadian women, seeking help, quietly without signs or petitions, holding our red umbrellas. We soon came to be known as The Women with the Red Umbrellas. Named by the MP's who wondered what we wanted.

Dozens of Members of Parliament saw our red umbrellas and came to speak with us. Our letters to the Prime Minister and to Anne McLellan were handed to them personally by MPs who supported us. Although Anne McLellan claimed we were sick women on a placebo and refused to speak with us, other respectful and logical members of our government invited us into their offices and offered their support. They gave us hope for a long term resolution where logic and free choice will prevail, where truth will be told without being seen as a threat to the Health Canada agenda.

On Thursday, June 12, 2003, we were invited to stand with two Members of Parliament, Dr. James Lunney and Mr. Reed Elley, to hold a press conference in the heart of the parliament building. After the conference, many other MP's representing all parties in the current government showed their support by standing with us outside, under the shelter of our red umbrellas.

We believe that truth, logic and choice (TLC) can be established in the regulations of Natural Health Products vs. Drugs. We encourage all Canadians to stand with us. The quiet impact of our Red Umbrellas took us places we never imagined we could go. We expect to continue on this path, ultimately to have a place in changing health laws in Canada to suit the needs of the people rather than the needs of Canadian industry.