

For seven years I could not tell reality from imagination. I also lacked all insight into my mental illness. This wasn't denial, it was a condition called anosognosia. I absolutely did not believe I was sick, I unequivocally believed my delusions. I thought there were cameras watching me everywhere; I believed I was running the CIA; I was sure everyone with a phone was a spy. I lost my marriage, my career as a documentary film director and, obviously, my sanity. Nothing saved me. Not my Master's degree from Stanford, not my Fulbright, not my supportive family. Mental illness doesn't discriminate. I was arrested for a minor nuisance crime and went to jail. I was hospitalized against my will six times for weeks at a time, but I refused to switch my medication, because I didn't have any knowledge that I was sick.

Finally, in 2015 I switched my medication and was delusion free in three days. To find out that everything I believed in for seven years was really symptoms of a mental illness, not the truth was as shocking as finding out aliens had invaded earth.

If I am forced to do Step Therapy, I will first have to try a cheaper, older drug, with many scary possible side effects and health risks. If the medication does not work - and many medications do not work for me - I am sure I will immediately develop both delusions and anosognosia once again and will refuse treatment. I could lose another seven years of my life and end up costing the system much more money due to stays in psychiatric hospitals or even jail.

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