
AN ANALYSIS OF PATIENT CHARACTERISTICS AND TREATMENT OUTCOMES IN BENZODIAZEPINE PRESCRIBING IN A SPECIALIST SUBSTANCE MISUSE SERVICE

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Introduction

Prescribing guidelines advise against long-term benzodiazepines prescriptions. This poses challenges to Addiction services, as patients often present with high risk factors: comorbid psychiatric disorders (which respond poorly to other interventions); physical disorders; high dose, risky and erratic use; and polysubstance misuse.

Objectives

The main objective was to gain an understanding of the associated factors that influence treatment outcomes and beneficial effects (if any) of treatment in individuals prescribed benzodiazepines.

Aim

The aim of the study was to look at characteristics of these individuals who are prescribed benzodiazepines in a specialist addiction service.

Method

Prospectively recorded clinical and demographic information was manually extracted from clinical notes and analysed using SPSS version 12.0

Results

52 patients were prescribed benzodiazepines (mean age of 42.21 years: M: F = 3:1). The average duration on prescription was 4 years and the majority of the scripts were non-reducing. 96% of individuals were also opiate dependent and on Opiate Substitute Treatment. Mental health comorbidity was very high (80%), the commonest diagnoses being Anxiety & Depressive disorders. Only 7% were linked with mental health services. Psychological interventions were offered to 78% but found to be beneficial in only 12%, with significant drop-out rates. 1/3rd had physical health problems, and 13% had pain issues. 94% found benzodiazepine prescriptions to be of ongoing benefit.

Conclusion

There was clear evidence that engagement with the service and treatment programme resulted in benefits with regard to drug misuse and associated risky behaviour such as intravenous injecting.