

BENZODIAZEPINE DRUG USE IN B&H: THE GAP BETWEEN RECOMMENDATION AND PRACTICE

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Introduction: Benzodiazepines are widely prescribed for variety of conditions. A long-term use of benzodiazepines may lead to addiction. The recent guidelines recommend benzodiazepine use for not more than 4-6 weeks for any reason.

Aim: To investigate benzodiazepine use in B&H.

Methods: The study was conducted in 4 primary health care centers in B&H in November 2005. Every patient over 18, who visited his/her family physician in the surveyed period, was asked about benzodiazepine use. The information from patients who used benzodiazepines were collected in a self-designed questionnaire.

Results: During the surveyed period 2596 patients (893 men, 1703 women) were asked about benzodiazepine use. Among these patients, 403 (15.52%) used benzodiazepines. Patients who used benzodiazepine were of different sex: 130 (32.25%) men, 273 (67.75%) women and age: 245 (60.79%) under 65, 158 (39.21%) over 65. The drugs were used periodically by 253 (62.78 %) and permanently by 150 (37.22%) patients. Patients used benzodiazepines during different periods: 2-5 year 148 (36.72%); 4 weeks-1 year 80 (19.86%); 6-10 years 82 (20.35%); over 10 years 63 (15.63%); less than 4 weeks 30 (7.44%). The most frequent drugs were: diazepam 60.55%; bromazepam 24.81%; alprazolam 13.40%; others 1.24%. The benzodiazepine was prescribed by: psychiatrists 32.26%; other specialists 31.51%; family physicians 19.60% and 16.62% patients bought drugs as self-medication.

Conclusion/Disscussion: The usage of benzodiazepines in BiH is very far from the recommendation. Many patients use benzodiazepines for years, women twice as men. Family physicians in B&H should reduce benzodiazepine use, but in collaboration with other specialists who prescribe the majority of benzodiazepines.