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AUDIT OF PATTERN OF BENZODIAZEPINE PRESCRIBING IN A COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH TEAM IN ENGLAND

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Aims: To audit benzodiazepine prescribing in a Community Mental Health team, with a view to identifying areas for improvement.

Methods: All the 245 patient's case notes were audited, from October 2004 to October 2005, of those in the Outpatients Clinic's case load, in North Shields. A semi structured pro-forma was designed. On the basis of the guidelines from Committee on Safety of Medicines (CSM) (1988), DOH Document (1999), DOH Ireland report of benzodiazepine commission (2002), www.benzo.org.uk, Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumbria NHS Trust Guidelines for hypnotic/anxiolytic use and Lanarkshire PCT guidelines, the standards were finalised. The audit tool looked at demographics, indications of benzodiazepine prescription, co-morbid medical conditions, substance misuse, psychotherapeutic intervention and follow up of patients prescribed benzodiazepines.

Results: 245 notes were audited. 24% of all patients were on benzodiazepines. Out of those, 56% were women. A third of these patients were between 41-50 year olds, while another third were older than 50years. Co-morbid substance and alcohol dependence was uncommon. The most common diagnoses in these patients were mood disorder (31%), schizophrenia (20%), and personality disorders (12%). Nearly two-third of patients suffered from co-morbid medical conditions. 25% patients had had psychological therapies. None of them were given advice about sleep hygiene and driving.

Conclusions: Older women with mood disorders are more likely to be prescribed benzodiazepines longer than recommended. Advice about driving, sleep hygiene, information about side effects and risks was not offered to most patients. Recommendations have been made, with a view to re-auditing and improving services.