

G-1439 Prescribing of benzodiazepines for insomnia and behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia in residential aged care facilities

Background: Benzodiazepines (BZDs) are commonly used to treat sleep disturbances and behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD) in residential aged care facilities (ACFs). The elderly are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of these medications. In Australia, guidelines exist for the prescribing BZDs in this group of patients, however there is a lack of research comparing actual prescribing patterns with guidelines.

Purpose: To review prescribing patterns for the use of BZDs in selected ACFs and compare this with best practice guidelines.

Methods: A cross-sectional analysis of BZD prescribing for residents aged ≥ 65 years was undertaken. Data were obtained from medication charts, medical records and case notes that included demographic information, BZD prescribing and other parameters listed in guidelines. Prescribing patterns were compared to National Prescribing Service (NPS) guidelines and Therapeutic Guidelines.

Findings: Two aged care providers with facilities over six locations were included in the study; 193 residents were recruited. Seventy-one (37%) residents were prescribed a BZD, most commonly temazepam and oxazepam. The majority of prescriptions complied with guidelines with respect to dose, but all exceeded the recommended duration of therapy. Fifty-five (77%) residents prescribed a BZD suffered from a co-morbidity for which guidelines recommend the avoidance of BZDs, most commonly a history of falls.

Conclusion: Although the choice and dose of BZD were appropriate, the extended duration of BZD therapy meant that prescribing did not adhere to guidelines. Residents suffering from co-morbidities where BZDs should be avoided were also frequently prescribed a BZD.

Location of Primary Work: Australia

