

Deprescribing Benzodiazepines in Hospitalized Seniors Using a Patient-Education Intervention.

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Background: The inappropriate use of benzodiazepines among seniors is common. We aimed to deprescribe or reduce the dosage of benzodiazepines among newly hospitalized seniors using a combination of medication review, patient education material, and patient counselling.

Methods. We implemented a quality improvement protocol from August to October 2017 for patients aged 65 or older and taking one or more benzodiazepines, who were newly admitted to one of 2 units at the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital. The intervention involved a structured medication review, provision of written educational material (the EMPOWER brochure – Cara Tannenbaum and Institute Universitaire de Gériatrie de Montréal, 2014) and at least one brief supportive counselling session by the clinical pharmacist or physician. Outcome measures included the number of people consenting to deprescribing and had benzodiazepines deprescribed. Process measures included the number of eligible participants who received the intervention. Balancing measures included the incidence of complications, new benzodiazepine prescriptions, and intervention costs.

Results. All 12 eligible patients consented to benzodiazepine deprescribing. Eleven of them initiated benzodiazepine deprescribing. Six of the 11 (55%) patients had their benzodiazepines discontinued, with the 5 remaining patients achieving greater than 50% dosage reduction. Seven patients (58%) experienced side effects during the deprescribing process, with over half (n=4) experiencing worsening anxiety symptoms. Five of the 12 (42%) patients required benzodiazepine substitute medications.

Conclusion. We were able to deprescribe or decrease the dosage of benzodiazepines in the majority of patients. Using a combination of medication review, patient education, and brief counselling can empower patients, support appropriate benzodiazepine usage, and is well-tolerated and acceptable. Clinicians, however, need to anticipate the management of anxiety, a common side effect.