

## A Strategic Plan to Address Benzodiazepine Addiction Resulting from Prescription Practices

Areas to Address	Patient Directed Strategies	Physician Directed Strategies	Program Directed Strategies	Legislative Strategies	Preliminary Research Issues
<p>BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT BENZODIAZEPINES: CHEMISTRY (POTENCY AND HALF-LIFE), EFFECT ON THE CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM AND BODY, APPROPRIATE USES AND IMPACTS OF LONGER TERM USE.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development and dissemination of <u>public</u> information on the uses, risks and long term impacts of benzodiazepines.</li> <li>• Development and dissemination of information about correct use and duration of use.</li> <li>• Development and dissemination of information about risks and indicators of addiction.</li> <li>• Development of targeted education strategies related to at risk populations. These include:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- mid-life women</li> <li>- the elderly</li> <li>- those using alcohol and drugs in harmful ways</li> <li>- those already diagnosed with a mental health disorder</li> <li>- those in high risk populations (e.g. HIV, Aids)                                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- those experiencing anxiety or depression</li> <li>- victims of violence</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved access to information on benzodiazepine composition, types, potency, risks, proper use and prescribing guidelines.</li> <li>• Development and dissemination of physician directed information on the early signs and symptoms of tolerance withdrawal and addiction.</li> <li>• Development and dissemination of physician directed information on alternative methods of supporting patients suffering from insomnia, depression or anxiety.</li> <li>• Development and dissemination of information on comparable drugs with similar effects (e.g. Zopiclone and Ambien).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved access for addictions and mental health treatment providers to information on benzodiazepine composition, types, potency, risks, proper use. prescribing guidelines and potential long term impacts</li> </ul>		

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PRESCRIBING PRACTICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of a public education strategy to inform the public and at risk populations of correct prescribing guidelines and proper uses of benzodiazepines.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support for the clarification and adoption of responsible prescribing guidelines within professional and regulatory bodies.</li> <li>Development of methods to enforce responsible prescribing practices.</li> <li>Development of procedures to identify physicians who are not following prescribing guidelines and to enforce compliance measures.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of a national system to monitor and support enforcement of responsible prescribing practices.</li> <li>Development of a neutral (non-industry based) and user friendly system for reporting drug side effects. This system would be responsive to patients, physicians and pharmacists.</li> <li>Development of standards and guidelines to support the delivery of <u>comprehensive</u> drug information (side effects and proper use) in drug inserts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research into the prevalence of benzodiazepine use and patterns of prescribing (duration, type, potency).</li> <li>Research into benzodiazepine prescribing patterns, related to other psychiatric drugs (eg. anti-depressants)</li> <li>Research into the cost implications of benzodiazepine use (hip fractures, pharmacare, costs, motor vehicle accidents).</li> <li>Research into the prevalence and impacts of benzodiazepine use on the elderly and other high risk populations</li> <li>Research into prescribing patterns related to women who are victims of violence.</li> </ul>

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TAPERING AND WITHDRAWAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of a targeted public education strategy to provide user friendly information on tapering protocols (i.e. long acting drug substitutions), duration, outcomes, short term or protracted symptoms and comfort measures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development and distribution of specific education on tapering protocols, substitute drug requirements, the symptoms of tolerance withdrawal, signs and symptoms of withdrawal and protracted withdrawal and methods of supporting patients.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education of addiction/ treatment staff on the correct protocols for tapering.</li> <li>Provision of information to targeted programs (e.g. mental health, addiction, programs serving seniors) on withdrawal duration, signs and symptoms of withdrawal and comfort measures.</li> <li>Development of specific strategies to treat and support those addicted to benzodiazepines through the development of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a national, 24 hour, toll-free telephone support and information line;</li> <li>- a national treatment centre which could provide withdrawal support and respite, information and training (to professionals).</li> </ul> </li> <li>The development of ambulatory withdrawal teams in larger centres. to support home-based tapering and recovery.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of research initiatives to examine duration and characteristics of withdrawal among affected populations.</li> <li>Development of specific research related to the health implications of long term benzodiazepine use (eg. cognitive and memory impairment)</li> <li>Development of research initiatives to correlate withdrawal outcomes with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- type and potency of benzodiazepines used and use of other prescription drugs.</li> <li>- duration of use</li> <li>- method of withdrawal</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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PROTRACTED SYMPTOMS/ RECOVERY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development and distribution of specific information to targeted audiences on characteristics of normal recovery (cognitive impairment), duration of recovery, characteristics of protracted withdrawal and comfort measures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific information on the normal manifestations of recovery and methods of addressing these (e.g. reassurance, support, information and lifestyle changes).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See above (Tapering and Withdrawal).</li> </ul>		(See above)