



The Benzodiazepine Withdrawal Symptom Questionnaire (BWSQ)

Overview

Benzodiazepines are a large family of psychoactive drugs used in treating a range of conditions including anxiety, insomnia, seizures, substance withdrawal and can also be administered prior to certain medical or dental procedures to induce amnesia or anaesthesia. Examples of common benzodiazepines include: diazepam (Valium), alprazolam (Xanax), lorazepam (Ativan), temazepam (Restoril), clonazepam (Klonopin) and triazolam (Halcion)¹.

A major concern for patients who have been administered benzodiazepines is the development of adverse symptoms (Benzodiazepine withdrawal syndrome) when the drug is withdrawn, both physical and psychological². In clinical trials, the FDA guidelines require adverse events to be reported by the sponsor³, so a means of assessing withdrawal symptoms in participants who have been administered benzodiazepines is necessary.

Technology

The Benzodiazepine withdrawal symptom questionnaire was developed at St Mary's Medical School, now part of Imperial College, and was first presented in a study by Professor Peter Tyrer and colleagues in the Journal of Affective Disorders (1990)⁴. It was initially validated in a study of 68 patients undergoing slow withdrawal from benzodiazepines⁴, but has since been used in a number of clinical trials. It is now considered to be the leading self-assessment tool for evaluating benzodiazepine withdrawal symptoms in patients globally.

It is a survey describing 20 symptoms in a way that is short, clear and easy for patients to understand. This means it can be used for self-assessment as well as being administered by clinical staff. The scoring system is also simple, asking the patient whether each symptom is moderate, severe or not felt. Again, this aspect of the survey design makes it easy for patients to complete.

An extended version also asks patients whether or not each symptom reduced or stopped when the course of drugs ended.

References

1. MedicineNet (2016) Benzodiazepines
http://www.medicinenet.com/benzodiazepines_sleep_inducingoral/article.htm
2. McKinnon G L and Parker W A (1982) Benzodiazepine Withdrawal Syndrome: A Literature Review and Evaluation, J. Am. Drug Alcohol Abuse 9(1): 19-33
3. Food and Drug Administration (2012) Guidance for Industry and Investigators: Safety Reporting Requirements for INDs and BA/BE Studies
4. Tyrer P, Murphy S and Riley P (1990) The Benzodiazepine withdrawal symptom questionnaire, J. Affective Disorders 19: 53-61

Benefits

- The leading tool for assessing benzodiazepine withdrawal symptoms
- Simple enough for patients to self-administer
- Validated by use in multiple clinical trials, for over 20 years

Name of executive:
Dr Emily Allen-Benton

Industry Partnerships and
Commercialisation Officer, Faculty of
Medicine

e: e.allen-benton@imperial.ac.uk

Technology reference: **7994**