Abstract

In 2003, the Danish Minister for the Interior and Health instructed general practitioners to reduce prescriptions of benzodiazepines (BZD) and cyclopyrrolones (CP) by 50%. However, no effective methods were specified. In Denmark, it is estimated that there are approximately 100,000 BZDdependent patients, constituting approximately 2% of the population. Objective: This article describes the implementation of a successful, simple and voluntary intervention to reduce the use of dependence-inducing drugs, while at the same time challenging practitioners ingrained habits and prejudices in this field. Methods: The rules implemented were essentially in accordance with the official Danish rules, such that a prescription for BZD and CP could only be issued for one month at a time, and only following consultation. Use was monitored using the Danish registration system, Ordiprax, which monitors sales of prescription medicine. Two Danish general practices, comprising a patient base of approximately 2300 were studied. With the exception of the severely physically or mentally ill, all users of BZD and CP were included. Results: After 2½ years, the use of BZD and CP was reduced by 75% and 90%, respectively. The reorganization of prescription patterns was seen to be significantly easier than physicians had expected. During the first three months, only four to five additional visits per week per 1000 patients were required. Subsequently, this number was stabilized at one to two additional visits. The usual collaborative partners, such as psychiatrists, homecare services, hospitals and substance abuse units were essentially not deployed. No serious withdrawal effects arose...

Keywords

Benzodiazepines, Physicians Practice Patterns, Denmark.