

Case 16 – Jocelyn

Jocelyn is requesting tranquillizers because she has been on edge, under a lot of stress and has had trouble sleeping. She is not your regular patient and you suspect she is visiting different practices for prescription medications.

Best Practice Response

- GPs should be familiar with the RACGP's *Prescribing drugs of dependence in general practice, Part B: Benzodiazepines* (1).
- Benzodiazepines are not recommended as first-line therapy for insomnia or anxiety. Their long-term use can lead to harms (eg, falls, road accidents and overdose), tolerance, dependence and dose escalation (1). A study by the Coroners Prevention Unit in Victoria found that benzodiazepines were the most frequent drug contributing to overdose death (2).
- Various subtle behaviours have been identified as indicators of potential benzodiazepine dependence (3) (4).
- There should be a practice-wide policy on prescribing drugs of addiction.
- If you do decide to prescribe benzodiazepines:
 - abide by state and territory-based laws regarding authorities for prescribing drugs of addiction (5).
 - check for doctor shopping with the Prescription Shopping Information Service.
 - Be respectful and non-judgmental.
 - Thoroughly document the conversation and options provided to the patient.

(1) RACGP. *Prescribing drugs of dependence in general practice, Part B: Benzodiazepines*. East Melbourne: RACGP, 2015. Pdf available at <https://www.racgp.org.au/your-practice/guidelines/drugs-of-dependence-b>

(2) Dwyer J. *Drug overdose deaths in inner northwest Melbourne*. 2013 Presentation at the Yarra Drug and Health Forum - <http://www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au/find/publications/coroners+prevention+unit+overdose+deaths+inner+north+west+melbourne+yarra+drug+and+health+forum+sep+2013>)

(3) James J. *Dealing with drug seeking behaviour*. Australian Prescriber. 2016; 39(3): 96-100. Pdf available at <https://www.nps.org.au/australian-prescriber/articles/dealing-with-drug-seeking-behaviour>

(4) NPS. *Managing benzodiazepine dependence in primary care*. 6 November 2015. https://www.nps.org.au/medical-info/clinical-topics/news/managing-benzodiazepine-dependence-in-primary-care#_ENREF_1

(5) Walter J. *Opioid prescribing: legislation and regulation*. 2017 - <https://www.mdanational.com.au/Resources/Articles-and-Case-Studies/2017/07/Opioid-Prescribing-Legislation-and-Regulation>