

Use of benzodiazepines in psychiatric emergency departments. A prospective study from 2003 to 2006

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Introduction

The main use of benzodiazepine (BZD) medicaments is to treat anxiety disorders and also sleep disorders, being the anxiety disorders one of the most prevalent syndromic groups in psychiatric emergency visits.

Objectives

The purpose of this study is to focus on two main goals. Firstly, to assess the prevalence of the use of BZD in a hospitalary psychiatry emergency service. Also, to describe the characteristics of the patients in which it has been used (given and / or adjusted) BZD treatment.

Methods

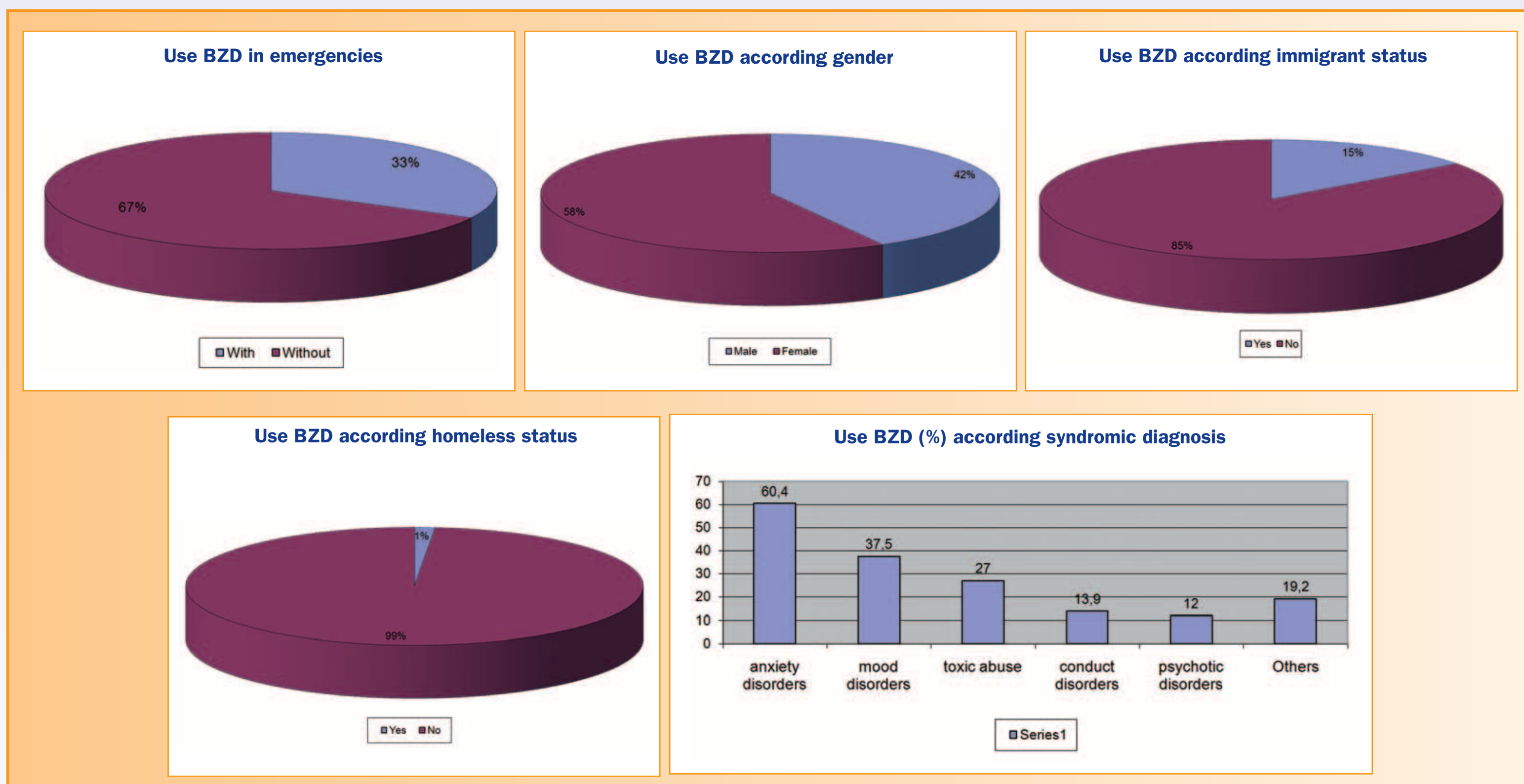
Using the data base of all the patients visited in the psychiatric department at Hospital del Mar, Barcelona, during the period of time of four years passed from 2003 to 2006, both included, it is analyzed the sociodemographic data (gender, age, homeless status and immigrant status) and also the clinical data (syndromic diagnosis, personal psychiatric

background, recent contact with mental health services, substance use history and requirement or not of hospitalization) of the patients in which it has been used BZD treatment. This data was analyzed with the SPSS 13.0 statistical package.

Results

During this period of time a total number of 8861 patients were visited. Out of these, 2887 (32.7%) patients required the use of BZD treatment. Regarding the sociodemographic data it is observed a predominancy in the use of BZD treatment in the female gender (36 vs 29%, $p < 0.001$) and the patients with an average age of 39.12 ± 15.1 . Also predominancy of use in the patients with an immigrant status (36.8 vs 32.1%) and in the patients with no homeless status (33.6 vs 11.6%), both cases $p < 0.001$. In terms of clinical variables, it is observed a predominancy in the use of BZD treatment in the

patients without personal psychiatric background (44.7 vs 29.7%), and patients that do not have recent contact with mental health services (40.9 vs 25.7%) also in patients who are free of toxic abuse (36.7 vs 23.1%) and patients who do not require hospitalization (37 vs 12.1%) All of them, $p < 0.001$. The syndromic diagnosis that are more frequently related to the use of BZD treatment in psychiatric emergencies in our sample are firstly, anxiety disorders (60.4%) followed by mood disorders (37.5%) and toxic abuse (27%).



Conclusions

It is observed a great frequency in the use of BZD treatment in psychiatric emergencies. As it was expected there is a predominancy in the use of BZD treatment in the female patients, also in the patients without personal psychiatric background and in the patients without recent contact with mental health services. There is a conformity

between syndromic diagnosis (related to the use of BZD treatment) expected and found in the sample: anxiety disorders and mood disorders, being in many cases assistance in emergency the first contact with the health mental services system.

References

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