

TO WHOM DO WE PRESCRIBE ALPRAZOLAM?; AN OUTPATIENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

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Introduction

Alprazolam, a benzodiazepine (BZD) with a short elimination half-life, high potency, and rapid onset of action, is commonly used for the medical treatment of anxiety disorders such as panic disorder and generalized anxiety disorder.(1)

Alprazolam, with its short elimination half-life, causes a more severe withdrawal syndrome and has a higher physical dependence liability than BZDs with longer elimination half-lives.6 In addition, the high-potency characteristics of alprazolam also increase the susceptibility of physical dependence compared with BZDs with low potency.(2)

Identify individuals who have been prescribed alprazolam and their clinical and demographic characteristics could shed light on elements to head to a sensible prescription of alprazolam.(3)

Objective

The aim of this study is to describe clinical, demographic characteristics and treatment dosages of patients who have been prescribed alprazolam in a mental health outcome service.

Methods

All patients who have been prescribed alprazolam at an Outcome mental health service (CSMA Martí i Julià) were registered in September 2018. Database information was completed with electronic medical records. Demographic and clinical characteristics were registered. Cross-sectional descriptive study was performed with IBM SPSS Statistics (Chicago INC).

Results

From a total of 120.000 patients attended in CSMA Martí i Julià, 30 patients had alprazolam in their prescription. From these patients 65,5% were women and the mean age was 55. From these patients 37,9% presented a depressive disorder, 24,1% anxiety disorder, 13,8% psychotic disorder 10,3% personality disorder and 13,7% other disorders. 75,9% of these patients do not present a substance use disorder. (figure 1) The mean prescribed dosage was 1,3mg.

Figure 1: Diagnosis related to alprazolam prescription

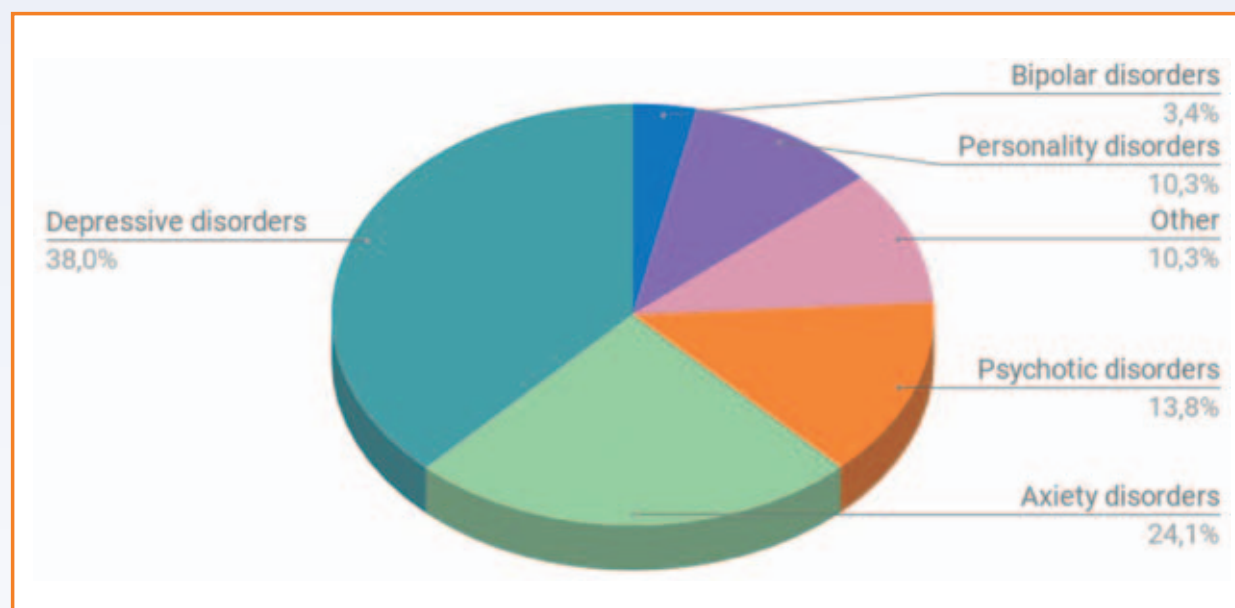


Figure 2: Profile of Patients most frequently related to alprazolam prescription

Women
Middle Aged
Depressive and Anxiety disorders
No comorbidity with substance use disorder
Mean dosage prescribed: 1.3mg

Conclusions

Profile of patients who were more prescribed alprazolam in this outpatient mental health service were woman, middle aged, with depressive or anxiety disorders with no substance use disorder comorbidity (figure 2), the mean dosage prescribed was high. We should identify these patients in order to consider other treatment options in long-term alprazolam patients users.

References

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