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Benzodiazepines in primary care: do we prescribe them correctly?

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Objectives: Analysis of the characteristics of Benzodiazepines (BZP): prescription reason, type and duration of treatment. Analyze if there's a correct monitoring after prescribing a BZP.

Methodology: Design: Observational descriptive study with follow-up. Setting: We analyzed patients with one or more prescriptions of BZP or Hypnotics Z during 2014 at a Primary Care Centre in the province of Gipuzkoa (Basque Country). Patients: Inclusion criteria: being ≥ 14 years with one or more active prescriptions for BZP or hypnotics Z in Presbide (electronic prescription program). Variables: Information was collected on demographic characteristics, diagnosis and therapeutic data (BZP prescribed number, type, duration, level of care prescription, whether or not a follow-up treatment and its possible adverse effects).

Results: 248 patients were analyzed. Prevalence of benzodiazepines was 22.6%. Average age of patients was 58.7 (SD 16.8) years and 64% were women. Duration of the treatment: 22.3% of patients had a prescription for less than 11 weeks, 10.9% from 12 weeks to one year and most of them (66.8%) for more than one year. We observed a positive linear association between patient age and duration of treatment ($p < 0.001$). Prescription reasons: 22,2% was because of anxiety; 17% for depression and 27% was unknown or wasn't written on the patients's medical record. The most frequently prescribed BZD were: lorazepam (41,7%), diazepam (16,7%) and lormetazepam(15,2%). Only on 20% of the cases, there was clearly a monitoring of the prescription. There were identified 9 adverse reactions.

Conclusions: According to the data, we don't the prescription of benzodiazepines is longer than the recommended on the guidelines. In a high percentage of the studied subjects, the prescription wasn't clearly attached to the diagnosis, neither if there was a monitorization after prescribing. Because of this, we think that these prescriptions should be reviewed to avoid problems with them.