

Abstract

BACKGROUND: Abuse of psychoactive drugs shows up to 900 thousand people in Czech Republic, benzodiazepine (further referred as BZD) alprazolam abuse up to 270 thousand people. This is a long-hidden and unresolved problem that also affects people who use drugs.

AIMS: The aim of this work is to describe the occurrence of benzodiazepine use among the clients of outreach program and contact center SEMIRAMIS z.ú. To fulfill it, research questions were formulated with focus on prevalence of use, sources of BZD, patterns of their use, the occurrence of risk use of BZD and knowledge of the risks associated with BZD use.

METHODS: Quantitative research using a standardized questionnaire was used for data collection and processing. Sample consisted of 79 respondents from clients of the above-mentioned programs using the method of self-selection and selection by judgment. The obtained data were processed using coding, qualitative data from open questions were subjected to basic qualitative analysis. Sorted data were then analyzed and compared using descriptive-statistical methods.

MAIN RESULTS: Lifetime prevalence of benzodiazepine use was 67 %, in the last year 37 % of respondents used BZD. 31 % of respondents use them daily or at least once a week. The most commonly used was Rivotril. 44 % of respondents obtained BZD from doctors, of which 85 % also obtained it from other sources, most often from acquaintances or the black market. Most respondents used BZD only orally (66 %), 21 % had experience with their intravenous use. 81 % of respondents had experience with concurrent use of BZD with another drug, of which 56 % use them this way regularly. Respondents most often combined BZD with methamphetamine or alcohol. 61 % of respondents reported negative experiences related to the use of BZD, 22 % experienced symptoms of withdrawal after ceasing their use. 30 % of respondents did not state any risks associated with the use of BZD, 51 % stated 1 risk, 19 % knew 2 or more. Only a third of the respondents were informed by someone about the risks associated with the use of BZD.

CONCLUSION: The main findings of the work were high prevalence of BZD use and low level of awareness about their risks among respondents. For this reason, author recommends to increase focus on mapping BZD use among people who use drugs and to inform them more consistently about the associated risks.

Key words:

benzodiazepines; problem drug use; low threshold services; quantitative research; abuse of psychoactive drugs