

ABSTRACT:

Background: Sedatives and hypnotics are substances to calm or relieve anxiety and to induce sleep. Long term prescription of benzodiazepines/Z-drugs may lead to the development of tolerance and the need to increase the dose. It is important to be aware of the risks of uncontrolled use of these drugs, such as harmful interactions with other substances, side effects and potential for abuse or addiction.

Aim: The aim of this research was to describe abuse of sedatives and hypnotics from the user's perspective, to focus on circumstances leading to drug abuse, to describe beginning and course of the use of these drugs and self-awareness of the problem. The aim was also to describe the current state of users and their needs.

Sample: The research sample consisted of 6 participants, of which 4 women and 2 men currently or recently using sedatives and hypnotics (specifically benzodiazepines/Z-drugs).

Methods: Data were collected through a qualitative approach using a semi-structured interview. Interviews were conducted, rewritten into protocol summary, further analysed using thematic analysis, modified using open and axial coding and categorization methods.

Results: Respondents may have misused sedatives and hypnotics to self-medicate symptoms. These drugs were prescribed for the first time with psychiatric indication in only 1 of 6 cases, in the event of chronic illness in half cases. Most respondents did not address the chronic problems differently and were not aware of the addiction potential of these drugs.

Conclusion and recommendation: It is necessary to continue the research in the field of abuse of sedatives and hypnotics. These drugs should not be prescribed for more than 4 weeks. In case of chronic illness, it is recommended to seek a specialist and address the problem comprehensively.

Key words: sedatives, hypnotics, abuse, substance use disorder, prescription drugs