

ONLINE SURVEY ON PRESCRIPTION MEDICINE MISUSE: WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE FOR MISUSE OF BENZODIAZEPINES AND 'Z DRUGS' IN SINGAPORE? POISONS INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND DELIVERY

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Objective: Benzodiazepines and the 'Z-drugs' are commonly prescribed for anxiety and sleep disorders and there is increasing concern regarding their misuse potential. The objective of this study was to establish the awareness of these drugs and the prevalence of their misuse (defined as use without a doctor's prescription or for any reason other than what was recommended by your doctor) in Singapore where there is little data available.

Method: Data was collected using an online survey delivered through a market research company in September 2015. Basic demographic data (age, gender, race, employment status) was collected, together with data on whether individuals had heard of a range of benzodiazepines and 'Z drugs' and if so, whether they had ever misused them. The drugs included in the survey are the (diazepam, alprazolam, lorazepam, midazolam, clonazepam, nitrazepam, bromazepam) and 'Z-drugs' (zopiclone, zolpidem) available in Singapore; generic and trade names were provided in the survey.

Results: 1000 respondents participated in the survey: 500 (50.0%) male, 499 (49.9%) female, 1 (0.1%) transgender; median (IQR) age 35 (29-45) years; 82.5% were Chinese, 8.2% Indian, 5.4% Malay, 0.8% Eurasian and 3.1% other race/ethnicity; 85.4% were employed, 11.3% were unemployed and 3.3% were students. As shown in Table 1, diazepam was the drug that most individuals had heard of (34.9%); of those that had heard of the drugs, misuse was reported by 4.5-9.0% of individuals.

Table 1: Number (%) who had heard of and reported life-time misuse of the drug

Drug Name	Number (%) of respondents who had heard of the drug	Number (%) of respondents who had heard of and ever misused the drug
Diazepam	349 (34.9%)	27 (7.7%)
Alprazolam	183 (18.3%)	9 (4.9%)
Lorazepam	151 (15.1%)	10 (6.6%)
Midazolam	146 (14.6%)	8 (5.5%)
Clonazepam	88 (8.8%)	4 (4.5%)
Nitrazepam	78 (7.8%)	7 (9.0%)
Bromazepam	75 (7.5%)	5 (6.7%)
Zolpidem	86 (8.6%)	7 (8.1%)