

Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention

Benzodiazepine Action Work Group Meeting Minutes

November 7, 2023 via Zoom

Present:

Alexis Ritvo, Co-chair

Barbara Connolly, Valsa Madhave, MD, John Staight, Terri Schreiber, Donald Thigpen, Teresa Cobleigh, Lelan Harry, Michael Bohan, MD, Madison Zang, Christine Neeb, MD, Evelyn Hawkins

Consortium: Jose Esquibel, Gina Olberding, Shayna Micucci, Jen Place, Jennifer Mackender, Eric Barker, Rosemarie MacDowell

Absent: See attached roster.

Co-Chair Alexis Ritvo called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

A motion was made to approve the October meeting minutes. Motion approved.

CME Video Update (Shayna Micucci):

All CME benzodiazepine modules have been posted on the Consortium website along with other provider education modules. <https://corxconsortium.org/resources/cme/>

Modules are available to view at no charge. Work group members were encouraged to share the link with their networks.

Peer Support Training (Alexis Ritvo):

Work group members collaborated with Choices Training to develop a peer specialist training course designed to educate peers, counselors, caregivers, and providers. Training covers benzodiazepine-induced neurological dysfunction, withdrawal, and patient support.

In addition to the November 2023 training, future sessions are scheduled in 2024 both locally and nationally.

<https://corxconsortium.org/projects/benzo-peer-support/>

Training schedule: <http://benzopeertraining.com>

Research (Alexis Ritvo):

Alexis reviewed ongoing work group research being conducted with Bernie Silvernail and others to raise awareness among the medical community and general public regarding benzodiazepine issues. Meetings are being held on a monthly basis. Work group members interested in attending the monthly meetings should contact Bernie Silvernail directly:

bernie@benzoreform.org

Educational videos will be developed and posted on You Tube. Eventually, a dedicated website will be established and will include other benzodiazepine resources.

Alexis summarized other research efforts: a prescribers' survey (medicine, internal and family medicine practitioners) to determine knowledge levels, attitudes and practices related to benzodiazepines, a scoping review to identify existing evidence related to long-term benzodiazepine withdrawal, and a collaboration with Kaiser in the State of Washington for a safe use initiative to impact prescribing rates.

Jose Esquibel suggested asking the Colorado Medical Society about the possibility of distributing the survey.

Discussion:

New work group member Teresa Cobleigh said she was very concerned about the ability of doctors in inpatient rehabilitation clinics to treat benzodiazepine and related opioid use disorders (including poly substance use). She also mentioned the limitations imposed by the current insurance model.

Alexis explained the original intent of the work group and suggested that Teresa's concerns could be explored further with the help of the Treatment Work Group. Shayna also suggested the Recovery Work Group.

Christine Neeb spoke about her work with (outpatient) addiction patients. She mentioned the challenges involved in admitting patients to residential treatment centers because of the requirement to discontinue prescribed benzodiazepines. There is a paucity of data related to withdrawal outcomes.

Teresa offered to summarize her personal experience and other thoughts in a one-page document.

Donald said he would like to collaborate with Christine.

Jose suggested the work group consider further discussion of the above and explore guidance options with Consortium contacts at the Colorado Psychiatric Association, the Behavioral Health Administration, and HCPF.

Member Updates:

New work group member Donald Thigpen spoke about a project his company has begun, which involves registered nurses coaching patients. Alexis asked about the possibility of having patients review and evaluate benzodiazepine videos. Donald said he would review one of the videos currently posted on the peer training webpage and could potentially review scripts prior to video production.

Evelyn Hawkins reported that her Life Center nonprofit will likely be operational in January of 2024. The nonprofit is currently working with a media company to produce videos of individual stories related to substance use. They have also established a support group.

Barbara Connolly updated work group members regarding Benzo Warriors' activities. She is working on an event that would address nationwide legislation related to benzodiazepines and

asked if work groups members could participate on a panel. Jose suggested that Rob Valuck would be the most knowledgeable person to address this subject.

Adjournment/Next Meeting:

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 5, 2023 from Noon to 1:00 p.m. The work group will not be meeting in January.

Attachments: Work group roster

Recent benzo-related research:

<https://news.ohsu.edu/2023/10/19/review-drug-for-panic-disorder-less-effective-than-previously-believed>

<https://www.psychiatrist.com/jcp/toward-practice-guidelines-for-long-term-benzodiazepine-treatment/?CLICK=1>