

Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention

Benzodiazepine Action Work Group Meeting Minutes

April 5, 2022 via Zoom

Present:

Co-chairs: Alexis Ritvo, MD; D.E. Foster

Michael Bohan, Christy Huff, Bernard Silvernail, Valsa Madhava, Lisa Gemmill, Rachael Martin, Nicole Lamberson, John Staight, Sabine Dordick, Brooke Thomas, Marissa Witt-Doerring, Christopher Schultz

Consortium: Gina Olberding, Susanna Cooper, Rosemarie MacDowell

Absent: See attached list.

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

Approval of Minutes:

A motion was made to approve the March 2022 meeting minutes. Motion approved.

Work Group Updates:

Peer Support Program: Weekly meetings have been held to work on curriculum development for the peer support training module, which is part of the recovery coach training. The training will also include a separate benzodiazepine module. Terri Schreiber is managing the program funding along with Consortium staff (Gina Olberding and Susanna Cooper). A meeting is scheduled to discuss Phase II funding (Colorado program deployment). Other work group members are invited to join any of the program meetings. The deadline for program completion is June 30th. Alexis is reviewing the BIND template.

Prescriber Education: Alexis and Susanna reviewed the provider education registration flyer for the series of benzodiazepine presentations that will be held the first four Tuesdays in May. A copy of the flyer is attached to the minutes. Benzodiazepine-Informed Certificates will be provided to participants upon completion of the educational series. The seminars will be professionally recorded during the summer and posted on the work group's website page for eventual on-demand CME course offerings. Funding will also be used for seminar promotion. Work group members were encouraged to share the flyer with their health networks and colleagues. The series will also be featured in the CMS newsletter and the flyer will be posted on the Consortium website. Bernie Silvernail mentioned the importance of using the word "benzodiazepines" in professional publications rather than the shortened "benzos."

Work group members briefly discussed the learning objectives for the sessions. Dr. Bohan offered to assist with curriculum review. Link to learning objectives:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1d278EuiyB0_vbL6sG1hcz8EWc3fT3jxF/edit?usp=sharing&oid=108169764528553890604&rtpof=true&sd=true

Speakers Bureau: D reported that the initial document for the speakers bureau has been finalized. He previewed the document for meeting participants. Speakers include D, Alexis Ritvo, Christy Huff, Nicole Lamberson, and Peter Eliasberg. Any member of the work group can join the bureau by contacting D: foster@denmp.com

The speakers list will be posted on the Consortium website and will be updated quarterly. D and Susanna will be working on the speaker fee structure, which will have to be approved by the Consortium. Speaker photos will also be featured.

Steering Committee: This committee is now on hiatus due to scheduling conflicts. The committee may decide to meet quarterly instead of monthly.

Member Updates:

Nicole Lamberson was contacted by Kevin Bruhn of Bexson Biomedical <https://bexsonbiomedical.com/>. Bexson is a pump manufacturing company researching the size of the market related to flumazenil delivery. Flumazenil has a short half-life and is delivered continuously by use the pump. Nicole said that Mr. Bruhn also wanted to speak with providers who are actively involved in patient tapering. She provided him the names and email addresses of several work group members

Bernie Silvernail said his organization has been working with Bexson on a research program. Additional information on flumazenil is available on the Alliance for Benzodiazepine Practices website Resources page: <https://benzoreform.org/> Anyone interested in specific flumazenil information can contact Bernie: bernie@benzoreform.org

Work group members briefly discussed the flumazenil work being by George O'Neil in Australia. The subject of flumazenil treatment could be discussed in peer support training and in educational seminars. Bernie said there is a flumazenil clinical trial currently in progress in Australia. Alexis said that Nathaniel Moore, in Colorado, is also doing work related to flumazenil.

Michael Bohan mentioned Dr. Coleman at the Coleman Institute <https://thecolemaninstitute.com/treatment-options/benzo-detox/> Michael and Bernie agreed to contact Dr. Coleman. Lisa Gemmill said that Dr. Coleman is her personal physician.

The work group will continue to discuss subcommittee development, including whether or not a subcommittee will address legislation and advocacy. Gina said the Consortium is currently tracking a bill related to fentanyl and that there isn't anything specific to benzodiazepines at the present time. She provided the following information:

House Bill 1326 Fentanyl Accountability and Prevention, introduced 3.25.22
<https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb22-1326>

Bernie's organization has contacted several major meeting organizers, including ASAM (the American Society of Addiction Medicine) to see if they can arrange to have a four to eight-hour benzodiazepine parallel track at a future meeting.

Valsa Madhava attended a recent ASAM meeting and said there was nothing related to benzodiazepines. She asked about starting a benzodiazepine special interest group and intends to submit a proposal to the SIG (special interest group). She suggested the work group members work on a topic for next year's ASAM meeting. The deadline for submitting this topic is in the fall. The deadline for the SIG proposal is early June. Christy Huff said she would be interested in assisting.

Alexis said Christy Huff provided a presentation at a meeting of the American Academy for Addiction Psychiatry several years ago. She also said that primary care physicians are prescribing the majority of benzodiazepine orders.

Nicole reported that the Virginia Medical Board has rescinded the requirement for “impaired” physicians to report they are experiencing withdrawal or receiving mental health treatment unless there’s a danger to self or others.

Adjournment/Next Meeting:

The meeting adjourned at 12:55 p.m. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 3, 2022 from noon to 1 p.m.

Attachment: Work Group Roster, Benzodiazepine Lunch & Learn Flyer

Peer Support Program Update:

Alexis reported that funding was received from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to create a peer support program for individuals harmed by benzodiazepines. Work group members D.E. Foster, Christy Huff, Terri Schreiber, and Trina Faatz took part in peer recovery training provided by Choices Training. Once the program is established, it may also be offered in other states.

Prescriber Education Update:

Alexis spoke about plans for future provider education lunch and learn sessions that will focus on benzodiazepine safe prescribing and tapering as well as peer support. Sessions will be held on Wednesdays during the month of May and will be 45 minutes to an hour in length. Participation certificates will be issued. She mentioned the importance of including individuals

with lived experience who could speak during the sessions. Primary care providers, psychiatrists, and advanced practitioners such as PAs and NPs comprise the targeted audience. The work group is open to other provider suggestions. An ECHO session was suggested. Bernard Silvernail said the FDA provided his organization (The Alliance for Best Benzodiazepine Practices) with an initial approval for an ECHO series. Recordings of educational modules was also discussed.

Susanna will look into CEUs for this educational series. She suggested it would be helpful for Alexis to attend the next Provider Education Work Group meeting on March 17th from 12 to 1 p.m.

Subcommittee Breakout Sessions:

Peer Support: Participants: D. Foster, Christy Huff, Nicole Lamberson, Rachael Martin, Barbara Connolly, Lisa Gemmill, Jen Place. Members of the Peer Support Program core group are D. Foster, Alexis Ritvo, Trina Faatz, and Terri Schreiber. D spoke about the Peer Support Program phases: Phase 1: Curriculum Development, Phase 2: Colorado Launch, and Phase 3: National Launch. Ginger Ross is serving as a training consultant for the program. Her work includes module development. The training module will remain the property of the Consortium, although Choices Training will have the right to use it for their training purposes. D suggested that the Choices training material could be improved.

Core Group members have been meeting with Ginger on a regular basis to discuss program development and the budget. Terri Schreiber's organization, TSRG, will be overseeing the management and distribution of program funds. Individuals with lived experience will be involved in the program as consultants. The training program will consist of a core module followed by other sub-modules, including one devoted to benzodiazepines. Subcommittee members discussed how the training incorporates benzodiazepines, i.e., how they overlap and how they differ from other substances, and the difference between the roles of a clinician and a peer support specialist. Terri also mentioned stigma and patient stereotyping, indicating that compassion and empathy are essential attributes for a clinician or peer support specialist.

D will set up a separate group email for the Peer Support Subcommittee. Other work group members will be asked for feedback regarding the subcommittee's work plan.

Jen Place asked subcommittee members if they would review a handout put together by the Recovery Work Group members who have identified as recovering from a substance use disorder. She said the language portion of the handout is important and applies to individuals with a history of benzodiazepine use/injury. Link to document: <https://corxconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/Supporting-Recovery-1-Pager-2021.pdf>

To submit comments: jennifer.place@cuanschutz.edu

Provider Education: Participants: Alexis Ritvo, Michael Bohan, Peter Eliasberg, Sophie Feffer, Valsa Madhava, Chris Schultz. Participants discussed the four-part Prescriber Curriculum Lunch and Learn learning objectives and session outline: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1d278EuiyB0_vbL6sG1hcz8EWc3fT3jxF/edit?usp=sharing&oid=108169764528553890604&rtpof=true&sd=true

Public Awareness/Community Engagement: Participants: Jose Esquibel, Susanna Cooper, Gail Dawson, Bernard Silvernail, Sonja Bjurstrom, Duke Rumely, J.C. Curle. Bernard spoke about his organization's plan for a national benzodiazepine symposium. The symposium is based on

a three-day International Benzodiazepine Symposium held in Bend, Oregon in 2017. The Oregon symposium included multiple breakout sessions and keynote speakers; however, not enough emphasis was placed on benzodiazepine-affected communities. In order to effect a change in behavior, it is extremely motivating to expose providers to people who have been affected by benzodiazepines. The target date for the symposium is early 2023.

Bernie reported that a group of medical professionals (including Alexis Ritvo and Christy Huff) are working on a paper concerning Benzodiazepine-induced Neurological Dysfunction (BIND). They are hoping to publish this work as an editorial in a medical journal. Plans are to gather all the terms used to describe the benzodiazepine issue in order to establish a formal term for a benzodiazepine injury.

J.C. Curle said she is interested in developing PSAs to explain different benzodiazepines, as related injuries are very confusing to people who haven't been exposed.

Legislative Subcommittee: Jose Esquibel said the subcommittee did not hold a breakout session. He mentioned that it would be important for the work group to prepare for this summer's Interim Study Committee meetings which will begin in late July. Work group members could report on progress made and suggest policy recommendations. The ISC comprises 10 state senate and house legislators (five Democrats and five Republicans). Jose said it would be particularly important to include the BIND definition in ISC discussions. Consortium staff is available to assist with testimony preparation.

Member Updates:

Duke Rumely: Sober AF Entertainment is offering speaking opportunities at their events during Nuggets, AVS, and Rockies games. Duke will follow up with D and Alexis by email.