

Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention

Benzodiazepine Action Work Group Meeting Minutes

June 7, 2022 via Zoom

Present:

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

Michael Bohan, Bernard Silvernail, Lisa Gemmill, Nicole Lamberson, John Staight, Barbara Connolly, Christina Dalpiaz, Terri Schreiber, J.C. Curle, Rachel Mascaro, Trina Faatz, Asad Omar

Consortium: Gina Olberding, Susanna Cooper, Jen Place, Shayna Micucci, 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 May 2022 meeting minutes. Motion approved.

New Consortium Staff Member:

Shayna Micucci has been hired as program manager for the Benzodiazepine Action, PDMP, and Criminal Justice Response work groups.

Provider Education Series – Comments and Feedback:

A pdf version of the slides will be posted on the Consortium website. Link to modules: corxconsortium.org/CME The slides are available for use by others; however, they remain the property of the Consortium. D suggested posting copyright information and permission requests before anyone is allowed to use the slides. Bernie suggested the slides could serve as a training resource. Professional recordings for CME credits will be completed this summer.

The slides will also be posted on the Benzodiazepine Information Coalition website, as they have a large following. Gina asked about the number of BIC website viewers, as she would like to pass this information on to Consortium funders. Viewer numbers are noted here: <https://www.youtube.com/c/BzInfoCoalition/videos>

Work group members discussed that only one organization might be able to post on You Tube at any one time; however (per Nicole), it might be possible to work around this and post on multiple channels. Links to the slides can be posted on other websites and blogs.

Nicole Lamberson said that she was concerned about the suggestion that antidepressants are a first-line treatment for benzodiazepine withdrawal since many individuals experience issues with them. Alexis agreed to add a cautionary note to the presentations; however, she acknowledged that antidepressants are considered a first line treatment and that this information should be provided. She said this is a systemic issue and that most benzodiazepine prescriptions are written by primary care physicians. In addition, many patients ask for a pill to feel better rather than pursue behavioral health therapy. Jen mentioned alpha and beta blockers.

Terri Schreiber said that Robert Whittaker believes that injuries result from medications and that his views may not be considered mainstream. Bernie said these views vary because of personal experiences. He has videos available on his website and said he would be willing to review them with Terri.

Robert Whitaker's books:

https://www.amazon.com/Robert-Whitaker/e/B001ILKGW2?ref=sr_ntt_srch_lnk_2&qid=1654626518&sr=8-2

Bernie: The best book available on benzos: <https://benzoreform.org/the-benzodiazepine-crisis/>

J.C. mentioned questions raised during the sessions concerning other alternative treatment drugs, pointing out that individuals could develop autoimmune reactions due to drugs affecting gaba receptors.

Nicole suggested putting together a list of medications and supplements. The work group agreed that reactions are individual and that it is difficult to be very specific about what is right and wrong. J.C. said people need to understand this is a neurological injury that alters the body's normal reaction to drugs. D agreed and suggested a list of medications of concern would be helpful.

JC: <https://www.benzoinfo.com/medications-and-supplements/>

Bernard Silvernail: See list "Alternatives to BZRAs" under <https://benzoreform.org/prescriber-information/>

Peer Support Curriculum Preview:

D reported that the curriculum is now being reviewed and funding is promising. The curriculum will also include training videos. Others are welcome to review the curriculum by emailing D directly: foster@easinganxiety.com The next meeting is scheduled for June 20th.

Public Awareness Activities:

Work group members discussed activities that might bring attention to benzodiazepine issues. It was agreed that members would be glad to honor Heather Ashton and her work, but not in connection with W-BAD.

Bernie said the Alliance is still pursuing the idea of a parallel track at a medical conference in 2022. John Staight said he would be interested in assisting, as he knows of event planners. John and Bernie will discuss plans offline.

Other public awareness ideas include discussions with news agencies/press releases, involvement of specific stakeholders (legislators), and events connected to the date the FDA announced the black box warning.

Susanna Cooper said most public awareness events have taken place at the community level supported by the Consortium. The Consortium is supporting Overdose Awareness Day events taking place around the state on August 31st. There are usually at least 30 to 40 events statewide. The Consortium has provided resources and staff has attended the events. Many events include speakers.

Christy Huff told Nicole that summer is not the best time for public awareness events because of vacation activities.

D suggested a subcommittee to spearhead the public awareness efforts. J.C. and Barbara volunteered to help with social media and graphics. Any others interested should contact D directly foster@easinganxiety.com

Member Updates:

The film “As Prescribed” just premiered at Berkshire International Film Festival and will also be shown at the Sheffield Film Festival. “As Prescribed” focuses solely on benzodiazepines.
Link: <https://asprescribedfilm.com>

There is now a direct link to the Benzodiazepine Action Work Group page:
<http://benzoaction.org>

Other Business:

D acknowledged Susanna for her work and great ideas as work group program manager.

Adjournment/Next Meeting:

The meeting adjourned at 1:01 p.m. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 5, 2022 from noon to 1 p.m.

Attachments: Work group roster