

## **Benzodiazepine Safety and Controlled Substance Reports**

Benzodiazepines (BZDs) are commonly prescribed drugs for anxiety disorders and insomnia. Although clinically significant toxicity with these agents in the absence of concomitant drug therapy is rare, patient safety is still a concern as BZDs can induce or worsen central nervous system depression, especially if combined with narcotics, skeletal muscle relaxants, or alcohol.

The abuse potential of BZDs is another concern as these agents are schedule IV controlled substances and tolerance, dependence, withdrawal, and drug-seeking behaviors have been documented. In clinical practice, an important issue when dealing with patients who abuse BZDs is that they also may be abusing other substances and receive prescriptions for these drugs from multiple providers. The situation may be further complicated if patients fill their prescriptions at different pharmacies.

### **Key Points**

- **Patient safety and abuse potential are concerns with benzodiazepines (BZDs). Their toxic potential is increased with concomitant use of other CNS depressants.**
  
- **In the last six months, over 580 Idaho Medicaid patients were excessively using BZDs and prescribed the agents by more than one provider; approximately 150 also filled the BZD prescriptions at more than one pharmacy.**
  
- **You may obtain a patient controlled substance report from the Idaho Board of Pharmacy if you would like to review the prescription fill history of one of your patients.**

A search of the Idaho Medicaid database revealed that in the last six months there were over 580 patients who were excessively using BZDs and prescribed the agents by at least two different providers (with different addresses), and about 215 of these patients had prescriptions from three or more providers. Approximately 150 of these patients had their prescriptions filled at two or more different pharmacies.

If you are concerned about one of your patient's use of BZDs *or any other controlled substance*, a free report may be requested from the Idaho Board of Pharmacy. The report will include all controlled substance fill history in Idaho including provider(s) name, filling pharmacy(ies), drug(s) name, and date and quantity filled. This information is monitored by the Board and is updated daily.

To acquire a report, you must be either a practitioner or pharmacist with a license to prescribe or dispense controlled substances. The patient must be one that you are currently caring/dispensing for or are considering caring/dispensing for. To request a report, you may contact the Idaho Board of Pharmacy at (208) 334-2356 to obtain a form that you must fill out and fax back.

*(Available online at <http://idahodur.isu.edu>, information current as of September 2008)*

*Idaho Drug Utilization Review Program*

*Educational Leaflet for Physicians, Pharmacists, and other Healthcare Practitioners*

Requests may also be made online (<http://bop.accessidaho.org/>), but you must first contact the Board to register for a user ID. Once a request is submitted, you may expect a response within 24-48 hours.