

Physicians with beliefs about long-term harms of benzodiazepine are less likely to prescribe it

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What clinician beliefs are associated with higher benzodiazepine prescription fills by their patients?

Results of a survey of primary care providers from a national Medicare sample



When clinicians believed that patients already on BZDs for years were at lower risk of harm, they were more likely to prescribe BZD to their patients.



Clinician-held beliefs not found to have an effect on BZD prescription fill rates

- Patients are unwilling to be tapered off the drug
- BZD works well to treat anxiety, insomnia
- Tapering causes unnecessary distress and leads to more frequent patient visits

Source: Maust, et al. Linking a Survey of Clinician Benzodiazepine-related Beliefs to Risk of Benzodiazepine Prescription Fills among Patients in Medicare. *AnnFamMed*. 2022.

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Linking a Survey of Clinician Benzodiazepine-related Beliefs to Risk of Benzodiazepine Prescription Fills Among Patients in Medicare. Credit: *The Annals of Family Medicine* (2022). DOI: 10.1370/afm.2883

Despite the continuing growth of benzodiazepine (BZD)-related overdoses, BZD prescription rates have held constant. Much is unknown

about how a doctor's own beliefs about BZD use and potential harm to patients might influence their willingness to prescribe the drug.

Using a Medicare database, researchers identified [primary care providers](#) who had prescribed a BZD in 2017 and surveyed a random sample of 100 doctors on their attitudes around BZD prescribing. Approximately 62% of clinician respondents reported that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, "If a patient has been prescribed a benzodiazepine for years, the potential harms from continuing the benzodiazepine are low," while 18.0% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

When clinicians believed that the potential harms from continuing BZDs were low for patients on long-term treatment, they were more likely to prescribe a BZD to [patients](#) for whom they cared.

The research was published in *The Annals of Family Medicine*.

More information: Donovan T. Maust et al, Linking a survey of clinician benzodiazepine-related beliefs to risk of benzodiazepine prescription fills among patients in Medicare, *The Annals of Family Medicine* (2022). [DOI: 10.1370/afm.2883](https://doi.org/10.1370/afm.2883)

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