

Evidence-Based BZRA Discontinuation 4: It Takes a Team

Why a team?

1. Connections to family and friends are often strained or severed due to the long-term nature and lack of public knowledge of BZWS and BZIS.
2. The unpredictability of symptoms often strains the patient/prescriber relationship, causes the patient to stop discontinuing, or leads to excessive visits to the prescriber or the ER.¹

The professional team

1. The patient benefits if the primary care practitioner works in concert with the pharmacist, psychiatrist, and other health care professionals.
2. Many professionals are not aware of BZWS and BZIS. The prescriber can help increase awareness by providing them with copies of these pamphlets and spending a few minutes discussing them.

Online support

1. There are several excellent online resources for patients. However, when it comes to BZDs, even the major teaching university sites may not be complete or accurate.²
2. Patients often need reassurance that their suffering is not unique, and that they are not alone in this process. The largest moderated blog-style BZD support website is BenzoBuddies.com, and we recommend this site.
3. Patients will often look online for answers to many medical questions about BZDs and BZWS. Many of the respected medical sites are still unaware of or downplay the problems. Thus, we recommend steering the patient to evidence-based BZD-aware sites, such as benzoreform.org.

Family and friend support

1. Patients are often cognitively and sometimes physically impaired while suffering BZWS or BZIS. This makes it difficult for them to maintain working relationships.
2. Patients need support beyond what the prescriber can provide during withdrawal and recovery.
3. In most cases, family and friends do not understand the long-term challenges of BZWS and BZIS.
4. Since it is largely invisible, it takes significant effort to educate family and friends about BZWS and BZIS.
5. Patient impairment and disability often makes it very difficult for the patient to provide this education.
6. It is critical that the prescriber provide information to assist the patient in this educational task. The most effective prescribers will assist the patient in educating a key family member or friend.

Patient self-management

1. In addition to following the prescription plan developed in concert with the prescriber, patients are responsible for stress minimization, proper sleep hygiene, diet and nutrition, and exercise.³

References

- 1 Moro RN et al. Emergency Department Visits Attributed to Adverse Events Involving BZDs, 2016-2017. Am J Prev Med. 2020;58(4). [Abstract](#)
- 2 Examples: Harvard notes only that BZWS “symptoms usually start 2-10 days after cessation of medication”, the Mayo Clinic doesn’t address BZWS, and WebMD only addresses BZD “abuse” and ignores dependence as a possible effect of long-term use.
- 3 See benzoreform.org/prescribers-information/ for details and links for each of these items.

This publication was produced and distributed by The Alliance for Benzodiazepine Best Practices, a non-profit 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation of researchers and medical professionals whose mission is to make evidence-based improvements to the prescribing of benzodiazepines and Z-drugs.



For further details and **references**, please scan this with your smartphone, or go to benzoreform.org/pamphlet-details-and-references/



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