

Triazolam Dispensing Guidelines

The January 1992 Health Protection Branch's announcement regarding triazolam prescribing guidelines has raised a number of questions and concerns from pharmacists, primarily relating to prescriptions for a greater quantity than the recommended 14-day maximum duration. The following general guidelines were approved by Council to assist pharmacists with the dispensing of triazolam prescriptions:

Triazolam is indicated only for the treatment of transient and short-term insomnia in patients who have difficulty falling asleep. It is not recommended for early morning awakenings. Duration of dosage should **NOT** exceed 14 consecutive days.

1. Provide each patient with a patient package insert every time a triazolam prescription is dispensed (including refills) in order to reinforce the information relating to the identified adverse reactions of triazolam. Special 7-tablet unit-of-use packaging, with an attached patient package insert is now available.
2. Supplement written information for patients with verbal counselling, inquiring particularly about any signs or symptoms of potential adverse effects (memory disturbances, behavioral changes, confusion, anxiety, restlessness, or depression).
3. Consult with the prescriber when new prescriptions for quantities greater than a 14-day supply, or for daily dosages greater than 0.25 mg, are received, in order to ascertain the prescriber's rationale, and exercise appropriate judgment.
4. Monitor refill patterns, and communicate with the prescriber should changes in frequency or quantity of refills occur, and exercise appropriate judgment based on information provided by the prescriber.

Drug dependence experts recognize that withdrawal from benzodiazepines is difficult and potentially dangerous. Expert help may be required, and the continued use of triazolam may be necessary until the patient can be evaluated. For some patients, particularly geriatrics, withdrawal may not be practical. Where indicated, it is recommended that discontinuation be undertaken gradually over a period of 6 to 12 weeks.

5. Undertake discussion with the Pharmacy & Therapeutics Committee (or its equivalent) and with the individual prescribers when triazolam prescriptions are received or requested for refill, for patients or residents of facilities.
6. Document all consultations with either the patient or the prescriber, using the reverse of the original hard copy or a special record book.
7. Use an auxiliary label to caution against consumption of alcohol.

For further information on Benzodiazepine use, refer to the Formulary Committee Bulletin, August, 1992, "Review of Benzodiazepines".

Adapted with permission from the College of Pharmacists of British Columbia.

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