Reviewer's report

**Title:** Benzodiazepine Use and Misuse Among Patients in a Methadone Program

**Version:** 2  **Date:** 9 February 2011

**Reviewer:** Stephen Fitzgerald Austin

**Reviewer's report:**

Reviewer's Report

BMC Psychiatry: Benzodiazepine use and misuse among patients in a methadone program

The article describes the self-reported use of benzodiazepines from clients enrolled in a methadone program. The data presented is descriptive using a self-selected sample that completed a self-report questionnaire on their use of benzodiazepines.

Whilst the article is clear in stating its aims relating to benzodiazepine use and/or misuse within this sample (i.e. prevalence, reasons for use, characteristics that define users and acceptance of treatment for their misuse), it is not provide a clear rationale how the measures were developed or selected to answer the aims of the study.

Given the sample size is relatively small and self-selected, there is a limitation to what degree these results can be generalized to other methadone programs. Despite these limitations this descriptive study provides interesting information regarding benzodiazepines use/misuse within this population enrolled in a methadone treatment program. In particular, the data revealing that the number of participants using benzodiazepines significantly increased after enrolling in the program is worthy of further discussion.

Submission as a short report could be more appropriate.

**Major Compulsary Revisions**

1. A clear rationale and description of how the 5 page questionnaire was developed and why the various validated measures were selected is required. It would be helpful to provide an overview of the areas the questionnaire covered.

2. The sample is relatively small and self-selected (191 participants) only accounting for 40% of the total enrolled in the program (around 500). It would be useful to conduct a systematic analysis to compare the demographics of those clients that participated and those clients that did not participate in order to determine how representative this sample is of all clients attending the methadone program. A further reflection could be undertaken in the discussion regarding the clients attending this program and other methadone programs (i.e.
in the USA) to allow a comment on the generalizability of these findings.

3. A clearer description of the main findings of the study relating to the 4 aims of the study (presented in the introduction) and the implications of these findings for clinical practice should be included in the discussion.

Discretionary Revisions

4. The article includes a table (Table 1) on the reasons for the initial use of opiates. It is unclear why this information is included based on the four aims of the study.

5. No detailed information is provided on the type, amount or frequency of benzodiazepine use within this population. This could useful information for the readers.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'