Reviewer's report

Title: Deprescribing benzodiazepines and Z-drugs in community-dwelling adults: a scoping review

Version: 2  Date: 20 April 2015

Reviewer: Andrea Fiorillo

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REVIEWER’S REPORT

The topic of the manuscript is very interesting, dealing with an important issue for clinical practice. The paper appears well-suited for the readership of the Journal, although I would suggest the authors to stress main findings of the present scoping review in a bullet-point list.

The following minor essential revisions are needed before resubmitting the paper to the Journal:

1. In the Abstract, the Background section should be expanded, in particular as regards the first sentence “Long-term sedative use is prevalent and associated with significant morbidity”.

2. In the Background, epidemiological data from more than one single country should be provided and clearly indicated in the text (i.e., what does it mean that “benzodiazepines are extensively prescribed medications”?). Moreover, prevalence rates of long-term use of benzodiazepines in clinical practice should be provided.

3. As regards the reasons for chronic use of benzodiazepines, only two studies are cited. This is a very important issue, strongly related to the relevance of the present paper, that should be expanded and commented on.

4. In the Methods, in the paragraph “Definition and search strategies”, the authors should define the range of search. Moreover, keywords entered in the search must be reported.

5. In the Methods, in the paragraph “definition and search strategies”, as well as in the paragraph “Collating, summarizing and reporting results”, Table S1 should be cited.

6. In the Methods, in the paragraph “Collating, summarizing and reporting results”, the authors report that “an abstract meeting was held to outline the process and model how to characterize intervention functions to establish consistency among seven members”. In Table S1 team members seem to be four people (AP, AM, DG, JB). Please clarify.

7. In the Results, the authors report that “only three studies exclusively examined
strategies for stopping Z-drugs. The remaining…” but it is not clear which is the total amount of papers they are referring to. Please, specify it.

8. In the Results, please clarify that effectiveness of the interventions has been evaluated regardless the type of the intervention.

9. In the paragraph “Deprescribing strategies”, authors should consider to insert three different subheadings such as “Pharmacological interventions”; “Psychological therapies”; “Mixed interventions”.

10. In the Results, in the paragraph “Deprescribing strategies”, the allocation of identified studies among “Pharmacological interventions”, “Psychological therapies” or “Mixed interventions”, is not clear. The authors should report another box in the flow-chart, indicating the number of studies for each category. Actually, the global amount of papers (and its percentage) is of 64 studies (percentage 87%), but the authors analyzed 139 papers, grouped in 74 original studies and 65 non-original studies. The authors should clarify it and consider to summarize such results in a figure or in a table.

11. In the paragraph “Intervention functions”, Table S2 should be cited. Moreover, the description of each kind of intervention should not be reported in the results and should be moved to the methodology section.

12. In the Discussion, the sentence “Pharmacological interventions were the primary discontinuation strategy in the majority of the studies within meta-analyses” deals with a very important finding of the present scoping review and should be stressed and commented on. I would suggest the authors to comment the different analytic approach adopted. Subsequently, they should discuss the finding that pharmacological strategies were the most frequently endorsed strategies.

13. In the Discussion, second paragraph, as regards the sentence “estimates of effect were mixed, with 47% positive, 41% negative, and 12% undetermined, resulting in a lack of clarity for how to best deprescribe benzodiazepines and Z-drugs””, the authors should describe and comment on their finding more extensively. It should be highlighted that the global estimate of the effects is not referred to a specific intervention.

14. In the Discussion, the authors should stress the importance to carry out real-world studies in order to assess the impact of long-term use of BDZs on patients with several comorbidities.

15. In the Discussion, fourth paragraph, the authors should include some references regarding the fact that existing studies did not assess the impact of BDZs discontinuation on quality of life.

16. I would suggest authors to replace figure 2 with another figure or table, since it is not very useful for the manuscript. In particular, it is not clear the reason why on vertical axis only RCT are reported as well as why each column is subdivided according to group age. Moreover, in figure 1 the caption should be provided.
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.