Emerging Drug Trends, NJ focus

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Benzodiazepines

• Approved for anxiety disorders and panic attacks
• Used for treatment of acute alcohol withdrawal
• Abused in combination with illegal drugs
• Prescribed by primary care MDs in abundance
• High abuse and dependence potential
• Acute withdrawal can be lethal just like alcohol
• 10% of patients who go into acute withdrawal will die
Benzodiazepines

- Valium- Diazepam
- Ativan- Lorazepam
- Xanax- Alprazolam
- Klonopin- Clonazepam
Benzodiazepines long term side effects

- Same effects on brain as long term alcohol dependence
- Do not cause liver cirrhosis
- Dementia and cognitive deficits
- Long term Hallucinosis
- Long term psychosis
- Patients end up in long term care/nursing homes
Alcohol dependence and deaths

• According to the CDC 1/10 deaths between the ages of 20-64 are alcohol related
• 70% of alcohol related deaths are men
• 36% of car fatalities are alcohol related
• NJ lowest alcohol related deaths in the US
Causes of alcohol related deaths

- Accidents, falling, drowning (swimming and boating while intoxicated).
- Suicide, accidental death, violence.
- Medical illness: liver disease, heart disease, acute pancreatitis, Esophageal bleeding, dementia, long term alcoholic hallucinosis.
Gabapentin

- Indicated for neuropathic pain
- Similar neurochemical effect to benzodiazepines
- Now used in treatment of opioid dependence
- Used on the street as an adjunct to enhance the high from opioids
- Strict regulations up to schedule II in some states, proposed in NJ
- Some agencies are refusing to care for patients while on the drug, e.g. Salvation army
- Similar issues with Seroquel.
Amphetamines

- Indicated for treatment of Attention deficit disorders
- Indicated for treatment of certain mood disorders
- High abuse and dependence potential
- Increasing rates of prescribing to high school and college kids to enhance academic performance
- Increased use by adults for enhanced job performance
Data on Amphetamines

• In 10 million employment drug tests in 2017 in NJ, total opioids use dropped by 12%, amphetamines increased up to 6%.
• Quest labs report 2018 showed a drop in opioids positive screens from 4.1% to 3.6% from 2017.
• College recovery program reported an increase in amphetamine use from 2% to 6% in 2017.
Data on Amphetamines

• Highest Amphetamine positive results were in 078.. Zip codes, thus Morris, Warren and Sussex counties.

• In 079.. Zip codes the average amphetamine positive results were double those of the whole state.
Amphetamines long term side effects

- Neurocognitive deficits
- Impulse control
- Cardias disease, these are the cause of sudden cardiac deaths similar to cocaine. Phen/Phen years ago used for weight loss caused multiple deaths leading to it being banned.
- Chronic debility and weight loss
- Unclear what else since historically were only used for a short period of time, wait and see.
Even newer threats

- Juul
- Vaping of nicotine
- synthetics
References

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• www.niaaa.nih.gov
• www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets.
THANK YOU