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A CROSS-SECTIONAL PILOT STUDY OF BENZODIAZEPINES USE AMONG MEDICAL STUDENTS IN SERBIA

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High prevalence of benzodiazepine use among citizens of Serbia has been described previously. The fourth year medical students are supposed to have sufficient knowledge on benzodiazepines, but it is also clear that medical students are not immune to substance use and abuse.

This study was conducted to assess the perceptions of a Serbian medical students (fourth year), regarding benzodiazepines utilization.

The study was conducted as cross-sectional, using structured questionnaire with 4 multiple-choice questions. The participation was voluntary and anonymous, 112 students participated and the response rate was 87%.

Results showed that slightly above half of the students (n=64; 57.1%) classified benzodiazepines correctly as anxiolytics/hypnotics (sedatives), while the others (n=48; 42.9%) non-specifically classified benzodiazepines as drugs acting on central nervous system. The majority of students stated that they never use benzodiazepines (n=72; 64.3%). Among benzodiazepines users (n=40; 35.7%), 100% were occasional users (less than once a week). The main reason for benzodiazepines use was insomnia (n=16; 40.0%), anxiety (n=12; 30.0%) and other reasons, such as tremor, muscle spasms etc. (n=12; 30.0%). The majority of benzodiazepines users (n=28; 70.0%) stated that benzodiazepines did not impair their concentration and studying, while the rest (n=12; 30.0%) noticed mild impairment.

Serbian fourth year medical students showed mildly disappointing knowledge on benzodiazepines regarding the classification. However, low rate of benzodiazepines use among students and the lack of recreational use indicate awareness of the risk of drugs misuse in this population.