

Integrating Complex Client Needs into the Treatment of Benzodiazepine Dependence: *the importance of consumer collaboration*

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Presentation Overview

Benzodiazepine Dependence

- A snapshot of our client population

Consumer-Informed Program Adaptions

- How our service has evolved to meet the complex needs of our clients

Role of our Consumer Consultant

- How we involve consumers in service design and delivery
- Current consumer projects

Benzodiazepine Dependence

Snapshot of our client population

Client complexity is ubiquitous in AOD settings. Here is how our clients differ...

- Predominantly prescribed the benzodiazepine or z-drug by a doctor
- GPs lack clear and consistent treatments to address benzodiazepine dependence (i.e., in contrast to opioid dependence)
- Collaboration with the prescriber is essential (e.g., approval of our reduction planning)
- Trauma experienced by clients is often associated with treatment by the medical establishment
- Protracted withdrawal syndrome (sometimes called benzo-induced neurological disorder (BIND)) means many of our clients become isolated in their experience. Family, friends, and healthcare providers often don't understand the nature of withdrawal

Consumer-Informed Program Adaptions

Starting the journey right

How we have evolved our intake process

- Modifications to the AOD Intake tool (e.g., restructured to facilitate a more narrative approach to capturing data)
- Developed additional training and resources for our intake team
- Extended intake for clients with complex/competing needs or with unclear eligibility
 - Treatment ordering, care coordination, and client education
 - Secondary consultations and education to referral providers
 - If extended intake leads to discharge, only do so when safe and appropriate

Responsive service streams

How we have evolved our programs and service design

- Additional preventative programs to accommodate co-occurring needs
 - Better Sleep Program
 - Anxiety and Depression Counselling Program
 - Peer Support Groups
- Expectation of non-linear client pathways; extended treatment has become the norm
- Additional support for exiting service and enhanced re-engagement processes

Role of our Consumer Consultant

Consumer experience with joining an AOD team

Considerations for integrating a lived-experience worker in an AOD setting

- Initially used awareness campaigns as platform to elevate consumer voice
- Focused on rapport building, collaborative development of role expectations and lines of communication
- Autonomy, choice, and empowerment are key values underpinning role
- Regular attendance at team meetings (and social events)
- Support and training opportunities to support role development

Consumer Consultant Projects

Some examples of how we have worked together so far...

- Collaborator on research grant applications and co-investigator on research project conducted in collaboration with Deakin University
- Contributed in resource development, program design, and education campaigns
- Co-facilitated and consulted on delivery of peer-support group
- Conceptualising new client-focused initiatives (e.g., My Benzo Story Podcast)
- Opportunity to present at conferences and speak at community events



Thank you
Questions?

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