

QIPP Detail Aid

Providing support for quality in prescribing

HYPNOTICS –essential for a good night's sleep?

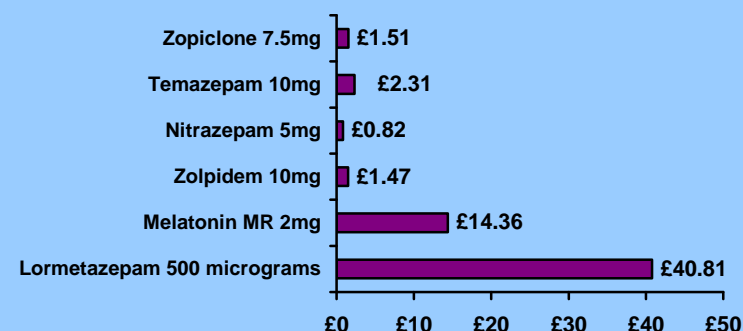
WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

- In the year to September 2011 primary care in the East Midlands spent over £3m on prescriptions for hypnotic drugs. The most commonly prescribed items were zopiclone (54% of the total) and temazepam (27%).
- Melatonin and lormetazepam are particularly expensive. Melatonin accounted for 2% of items dispensed but 41% of overall spending (an average of £78 per item).
- If prescribing of hypnotics could be halved, £1.5m could be made available to spend on other services
- ADD LOCAL DATA HERE**

WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE?

- NICE reviewed the evidence for the newer hypnotic drugs (the 'Z' drugs) in 2004 (TA 77).¹ NICE said that these drugs should be used only second line to non-drug methods for insomnia and that the cheapest drug should be used. They also said that if these agents are prescribed, it should be for the shortest period of time and strictly according to the licence for the drug. None of these agents is licensed for use in the UK for longer than 28 days.
- Despite this advice the numbers of hypnotic prescriptions in England have not declined. Over the last 5 years prescription numbers for zopiclone have actually increased by around 30%.²
- One study found that 92% of prescribing of hypnotics in Primary Care is actually on repeat prescription. Of over 700 patients who responded to a questionnaire, 42% said they had not been advised about duration of such treatment and 45% had been advised to take the hypnotics for longer than licensed.²
- The incidence of road traffic accidents (RTAs) is at least doubled in those taking hypnotics (even short acting ones), compared with non-users. Other evidence suggests increased risks of falls and hip fractures when taking hypnotics.

WHAT ARE THE COSTS?



Costs for 28 days supply, from MIMS/Drug Tariff December 2011

KEY MESSAGES

- Hypnotics should not be used first line for insomnia, sleep hygiene is more appropriate.**
- Over 90% of hypnotic prescribing is on repeat prescription systems in Primary Care, despite the fact that most agents are not licensed for longer than 28 days.**
- Unlicensed melatonin accounts for a disproportionate amount of NHS spending on hypnotics.**
- Patients should be advised that hypnotic use should be short term only. They should be informed of the increased risks of RTAs and falls, even with short acting agents.**

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References:

- NICE guidance (TA77 at <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/TA77>, Accessed on 29/11/2011
- NPC. Key therapeutic topics (Hypnotics). Available at http://www.npc.nhs.uk/qipp/resources/hypnotics_qipp_keyslides.ppt#1020,3, Key questions, accessed 29/11/2011

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