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Press release

**High-dose lormetazepam dependence: strange case**

**of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde**

The University's research on high-dose benzodiazepine abuse published in the international journal “Internal and Emergency Medicine”

**High-dose BZD dependence is an emerging substance use disorder, and Lormetazepam (LMZ) is the most commonly abused BZD in Italy. A study conducted by the University of Verona and published in the November issue of the scientific journal "Internal and Emergency Medicine", has investigated the socio-demographic and clinical features of the affected patients, and the root causes of this type of substance abuse.**

**The study was conducted by a research team coordinated by Stefano Tamburin, professor of Neurology at the Department of Neurosciences, Biomedicine and Movement of the University of Verona, directed by Andrea Sbarbati, and Fabio Lugoboni, in charge of the Addiction Medicine Unit at the University Hospital of Verona (Aoui - Azienda ospedaliera universitaria integrata di Verona).**

The study – which evaluated 1,112 patients admitted to the Addiction Medicine Unit (University Hospital of Verona, Italy) for detoxification from high-dose BZD dependence, – showed that high-dose LMZ abuse had an increasing prevalence from 2003 to 2018. Certain socio-demographic and clinical features of LMZ vs. other BZD abusers significantly differed. Almost all LMZ abusers (96.7%) took oral solution, while two-thirds of other BZD abusers took tablets. The large prevalence of high-dose LMZ abusers in Italy may be strongly related to the availability and characteristics of oral formulation that may transform the innocuous Dr. Jekyll tablets into an evil Mr. Hyde.

"We now know from many studies that half of those who, for various reasons, take BZD tend to do so for long periods (years). In these patients the risk of developing dependence is very high, above 80%. The group of patients analysed in this study is different. In this case we dealt with high-dose users, i.e. people who take much higher amounts of BZD than the maximum daily doses allowed. There are far fewer studies exploring this type of patient," explains **Tamburin**. "We can say that 2% of those who take, for various reasons, benzodiazepines, develop tolerance and addiction, then need to take increasing doses. As a result, there could be 130,000 individuals in Italy who take extra-therapeutic doses of benzodiazepines every day. These numbers are significant, and we believe that the health system is totally unprepared to deal with these issues".

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[**https://link.springer.com/journal/11739/14/8**](https://link.springer.com/journal/11739/14/8)

**For further information and/or interviews:**

Stefano Tamburin, email: stefano.tamburin@univr.it, tel: +39 3475235580.

**Ufficio Stampa e Comunicazione istituzionale**

Direzione Comunicazione e Governance

Telefono: 045.8028015 - 8717

M. 335 1593262

Email: ufficio.stampa@ateneo.univr.it