

BARBITURATES, SEDATIVE-HYPNOTICS AND TRANQUILLIZERS

Use

The use of sedatives, barbiturates, and tranquillizers for non-medical purposes among Ontario students has been tracked since 1981. Past year sedative use hovered around 4% during the early 1980s, declining to between 1% and 2% during most of the 1990s. However, the 1999 survey found sedative use increased among Toronto students, reaching the levels seen during the early 1980s (about 4%). In 2001, sedative use dropped back down to 2%. (Table 1, Page T1)

The same scenario can be seen for tranquillizer use among students, with past year use increasing to about 4% in 1999, and then dropping back down to 1% in 2001 – the same level seen during the early 1990s.

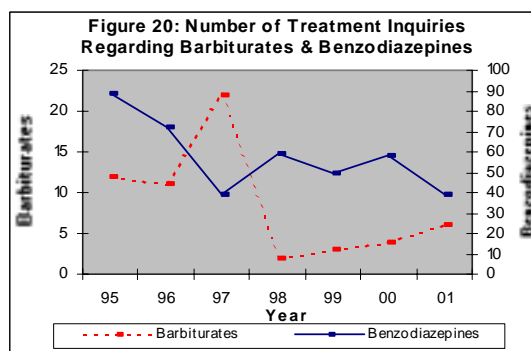
Among Toronto street youth interviewed in 1992, 29% reported use of tranquillizers. The 1999 SHOUT street youth survey did not address the use of these substances.

While the 2000 peer reports from The Works did not query the use of sedatives, these substances were commonly mentioned in the reports of peer outreach workers in 1999. Use of barbiturates, sedative-hypnotics and tranquillizers were mentioned in seven of the 35 reports (or 20%); Valium was among those mentioned the most often.

Treatment Data

Treatment requests for barbiturate use have remained low throughout the seven years monitored both for Toronto as well as the rest of Ontario. For the most recent reporting period, 6 barbiturate-related requests were received by DART from Toronto. This represented 0.2% of all treatment inquiries, consistent with previous periods. For areas outside of Toronto, the volume of these requests again was quite low, with the 19 requests received this year representing less than 1% of all those received for the area (Figure 20 below, Table 10, Pages T16-T17).

Benzodiazepine-related treatment requests, while at a higher level than those for barbiturates, have steadily decreased in the period studied. The 39 requests, representing 1.2% of all those received from Toronto for the period 2000-2001, compares with a high of 89 requests in 1994, or 4.6% of all requests at that time. For the rest of Ontario, there has been a similar, yet less dramatic, decline in these requests. The 196 requests in the most recent reporting period represents 1.6% of all requests received. This compares to a high of 3.7% of all requests received in 1995-1996, with a fairly steady decline since that time.



Drug-Related Deaths

Sixty-seven of the drug-related deaths in 1998 included positive findings for the drugs in this category. As seen in Figure 21, this finding falls near the middle of the range of sedative-related deaths observed over the past decade. The lethality studies indicate that these drugs are generally used in combination with others (Table 7, Pages T9-T11).

