JUST SAY “NO” TO THE COMBO

Concurrent Use of Opioids and Benzodiazepines is a dangerous combination1 -

• Between 2001 and 2013, concurrent use of opioids and benzodiazepine drugs increased 80%
• Concurrent users had twice the risk of an emergency department visit or inpatient admission for opioid overdose
• About 30% of fatal opioid overdoses occurred in people also using benzodiazepines

In 2016, the FDA issued a serious warning against concurrent use of these drug classes2

WHY IS THIS A PROBLEM?

• Opioids and Benzodiazepines both depress the central nervous system
• Common side effects of opioids and benzodiazepines include drowsiness, dizziness, and dependence/misuse/abuse
• Concurrent use, even at prescribed doses, increases the risk of significant respiratory depression and increases the risk of opioid overdose

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

• Use your state’s prescription drug monitoring database to identify all controlled drugs patients may be taking
• Use opioid screening tools to identify patients at high risk for adverse events, dependence
• Consider non-narcotic alternatives and non-pharmacologic alternatives to treatment
• If the drugs must be used, use minimum effective doses for the shortest duration possible
• Consider all drug therapy as part of a comprehensive patient-centered care plan
• Teach patients to recognize opioid adverse effects and symptoms of overdose such as sedation, difficulty breathing
• The FDA recommends that medication assisted treatment of addiction with opioids/opioid analogues should not be withheld in persons also on benzodiazepines or other CNS depressant drugs. However, due to the increased risk of serious side effects, patients on combined therapy should be monitored very closely3

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