|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **DRUG ALERT** | | |
| **NAME OF SUBSTANCE/SUBJECT** | **INCREASING INCIDENCE OF ILLICIT ALPRAZOLAM (“XANAX”) USE IN GRAMPIAN** | |
| **What type of incident does this alert refer to?**  *For example a drug related death, high number of overdoses, contaminated drugs in the area (unusually high or low purity), drugs in the area causing concern, other (please specify)* | The alerts team has been made aware of the growing use of a substance sold as “Xanax” (alprazolam) in Grampian. Although it is impossible to confirm the content or strength of illicit substances there has been an increase in both hospital admissions involving self-reported alprazolam use and drug deaths where alprazolam is present.  Although this alert focuses on alprazolam there are a number of other substances that continue to cause harm. This alert is intended to raise awareness, increase knowledge and assist in assessing the current trends in drug use across Grampian. | |
| **IMAGE/DESCRIPTION OF SUBSTANCE** | Image result for fake xanax | There may be various tablets available however there are reports of both red and white counterfeit versions of “Xanax” similar to this picture being sold. |
| **OUTLINE OF HEALTH RISK, INCLUDING SYMPTOMS**  *Explain what the consequences of taking this substance are* | See additional fact sheet. | |
| **WHAT TO DO IF THE SUBSTANCE HAS BEEN TAKEN** | Where a person is unresponsive or experiencing symptoms which are causing concern **dial 999 and ask for an ambulance**. If opioids have also been taken, or if unsure what has been taken, naloxone should be administered in line with the naloxone take home program. Although naloxone will not reverse the effects of benzodiazepine drugs like Xanax, it will reverse the effects of any opioid present. | |
| **WHERE TO GO FOR HELP / CONTACT DETAILS** | In a medical emergency an ambulance should be called as above.  For advice and support on substance use Alcohol and Drugs Action is open 7 days a week and has a dedicated helpline 01224 597400. For more details see [www.drugsaction.co.uk](http://www.drugsaction.co.uk)  Local drop in services are available Monday to Friday in:  North Aberdeenshire:  Turning Point Scotland (Peterhead). Telephone: 01779 470490  Arrows (Elgin). Telephone: 01343 610500 | |
| **ACTION REQUIRED** | **All services**   * Services should ensure that all staff working with people who use substances are aware of the symptoms and risks of alprazolam use. (Supporting fact sheet attached) * Front line staff should provide harm reduction advice (below) * Feedback any reports or intelligence on harm associated with “Xanax” (alprazolam) use to the substance misuse alerts email address [nhsg.substancemisusealert@nhs.net](mailto:nhsg.substancemisusealert@nhs.net). A physical description of the substance taken and reported effects would be particularly helpful. | |
| **PROVIDE SPECIFIC HARM REDUCTION ADVICE** | Services in contact with people who use drugs should ensure that all staff are confident in discussing generic harm reduction messages with clients as it is impossible to guarantee which the content or purity of a substance that has been purchased illicitly. This also applies to substances that are bought from on line retailers.  Harm reduction advice may include: -   * The risk of overdose is higher when Xanax is taken together with alcohol or opioid containing drugs. The combination has an additional respiratory depressant effect greater than either substance taken on its own. * A small amount of all substances should be tested first to assess the effect and strength. * Wherever possible, not to use substances on your own * Advice on how to identify and respond to overdose and the importance of calling 999 and asking for an ambulance. * Training and supply of naloxone. Naloxone will not reverse the effects of benzodiazepine drugs like Xanax, it will reverse the effects of any opioid drugs that have also been taken. If unsure what has been taken naloxone should still be administered. * Sharing this information with peers * Signposting or referral of people who are concerned about their alprazolam use or dependence to specialist services for support and/or assessment. This may include treatment services or 3rd sector agencies such as Alcohol and Drugs Action, Arrows and Turning Point Scotland. | |

**Sender name / designation: Fiona Raeburn, Substance Misuse Pharmacist**

**Sender e-mail address:** [**nhsg.substancemisusealert@nhs.net**](mailto:nhsg.substancemisusealert@nhs.net)

**Date e-mail sent: 24/10/2017**