

Pregabalin in NI

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CRANSTOUN
Empowering People, Empowering Change



Content

- Drivers for use
- Overdose
- Harm reduction





A troubled history?



Benzodiazepines and NI

- ❑ Introduced in early 1960's – as safer than barbituates
- ❑ 'Mother's little helpers' - diazepam
- ❑ Iatrogenic harms evident by 1980's
- ❑ Early 2000's DOH in NI gave advice to reduce prescribing
- ❑ Prescribing of diazepam and other benzos reduced in the coming years



And into the void.....up steps pregabalin



ORIGINALLY LICENSED FOR EPILEPSY



LICENSE FOR EPILEPSY IN UK EXPIRED IN
2014, BUT FOR NEUROPATHIC PAIN
LICENSE EXPIRED IN 2017



WHAT NEXT FOR PREGABALIN? GAD!

Following ACMD advice in 2018

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Pregabalin/Lyrica reclassified to a class C drug

By Kelly Bonner
BBC News NI

🕒 1 April 2019



A persistent pain

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Commonly used treatments for chronic pain can do more harm than good and should not be used, says NICE in draft guidance

A number of commonly used drug treatments for chronic primary pain have little or no evidence that they work and shouldn't be prescribed, NICE has said in its draft clinical guideline published today (3 August 2020) on the assessment and management of chronic pain in over 16s.

Drugs

The Strange Drug Killing Northern Ireland's Heroin Users

One legacy of the Troubles is a drug named "bud".

By [Stephen Donnan-Dalzell](#)

06 December 2019, 9:42am [Share](#) [Tweet](#) [Snap](#)



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Justin Trudeau Won't Decriminalize Drugs, Despite Record Overdose Deaths in B.C.

MANISHA KRISHNAN

07.21.20

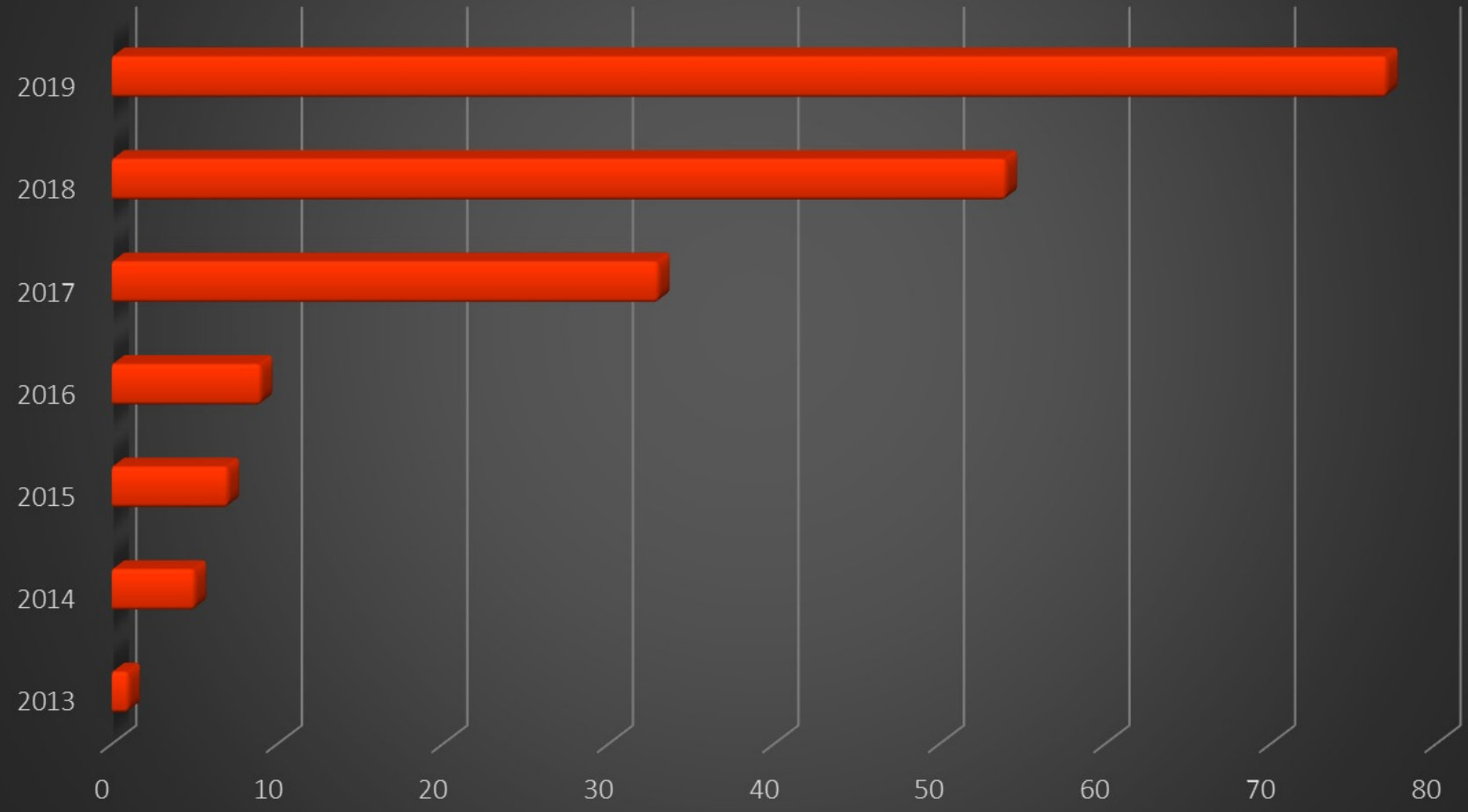


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Researchers Think a K-Hole Might Actually Be the Brain Going Offline



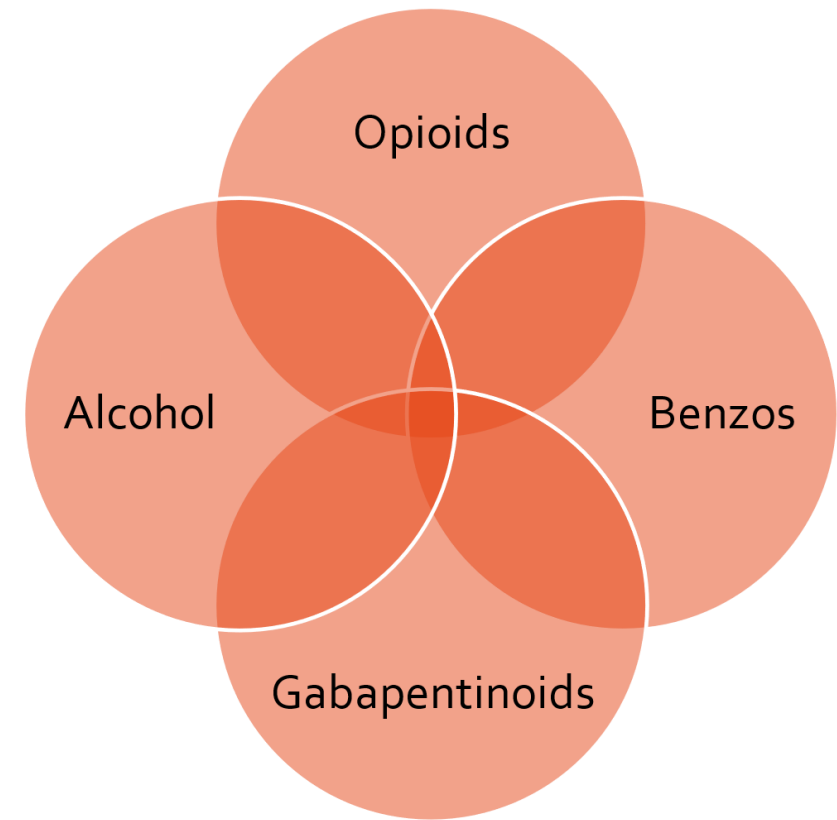
Drug related deaths involving pregabalin in NI: NISRA 2021



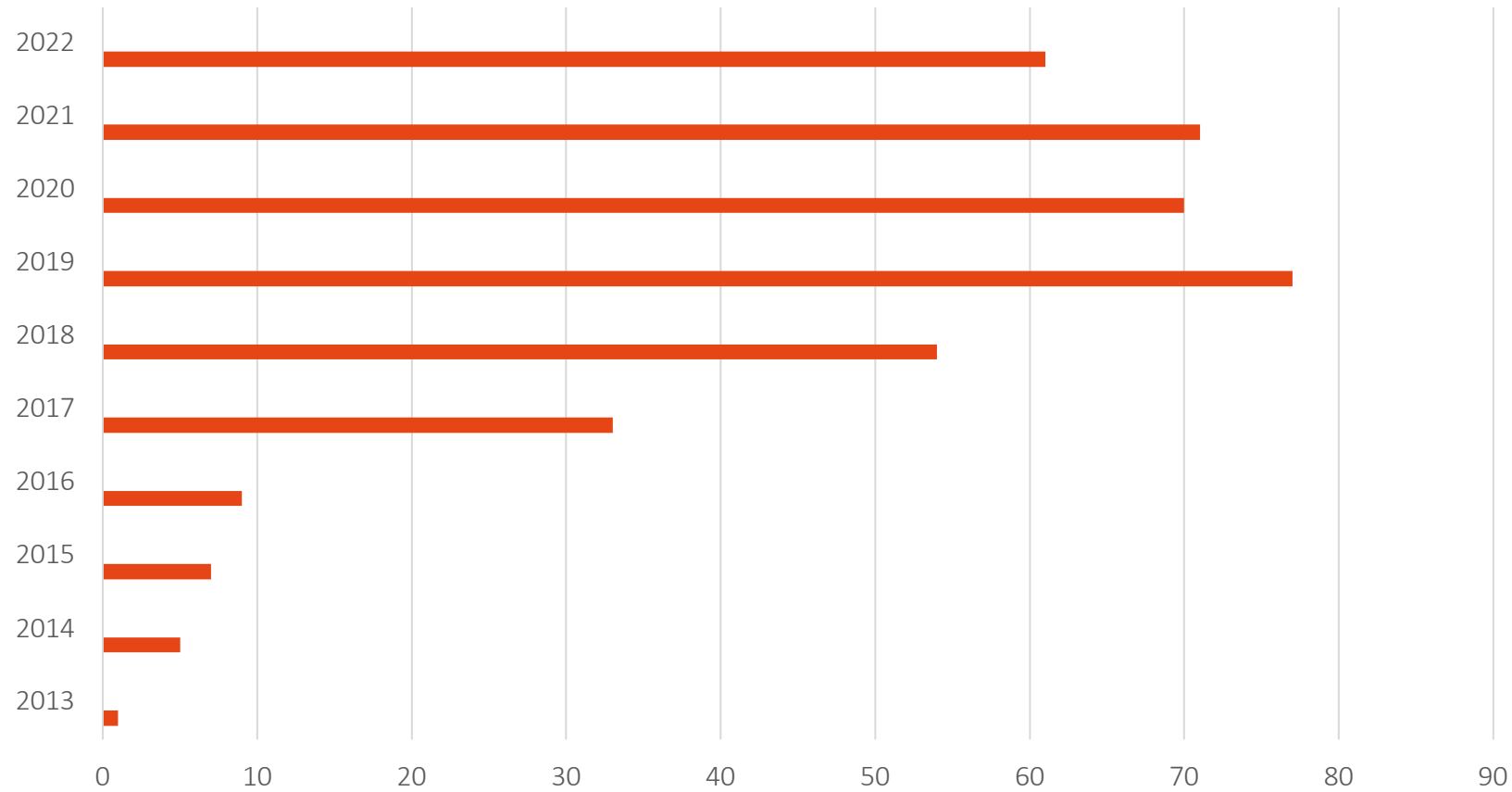
Patterns of use

Overdoses involving only pregabalin are unusual. The vast majority (89%) of them involve either heroin, benzos or alcohol.

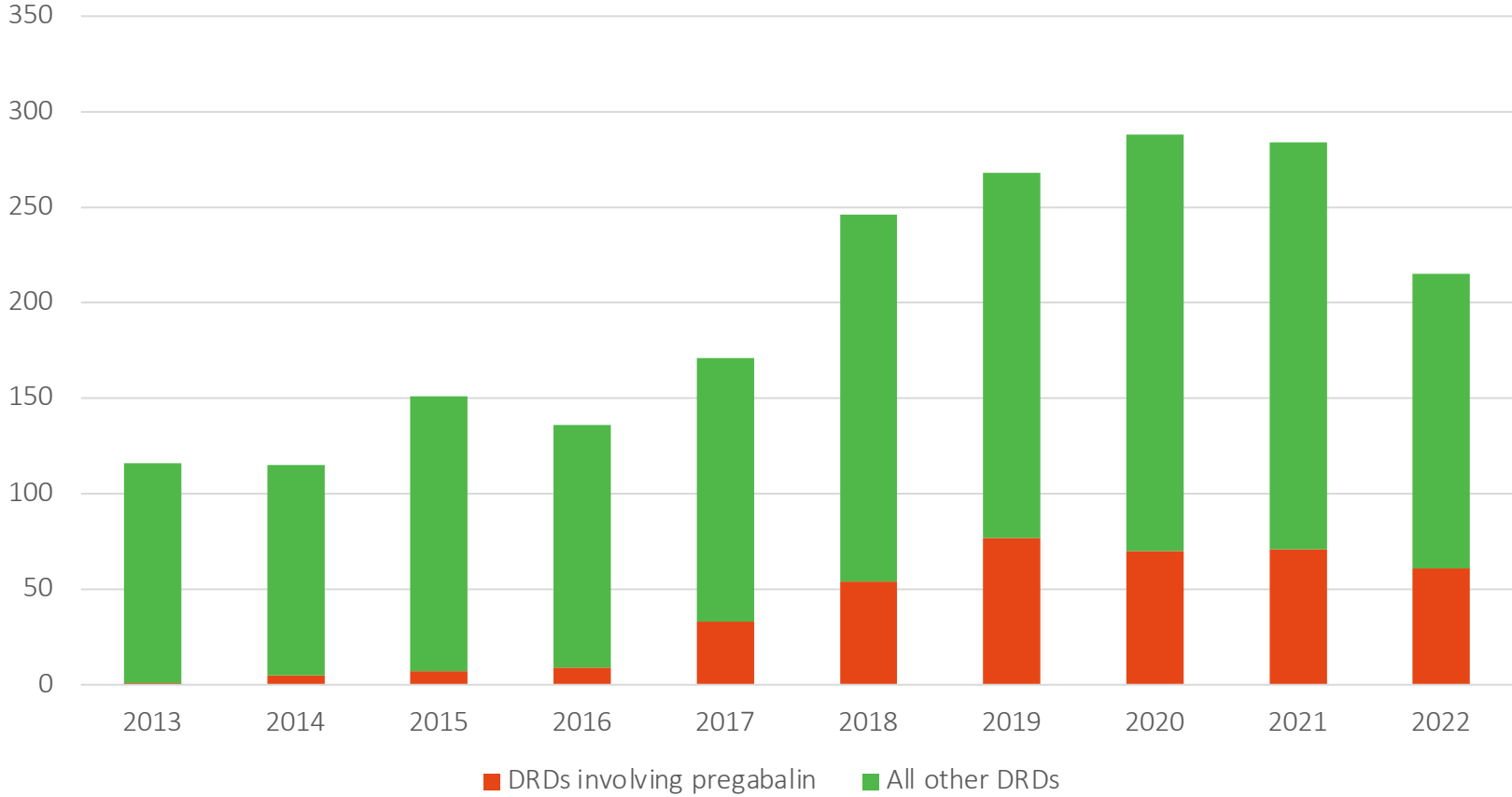
They are often used as a cheap way to make other depressants stronger.



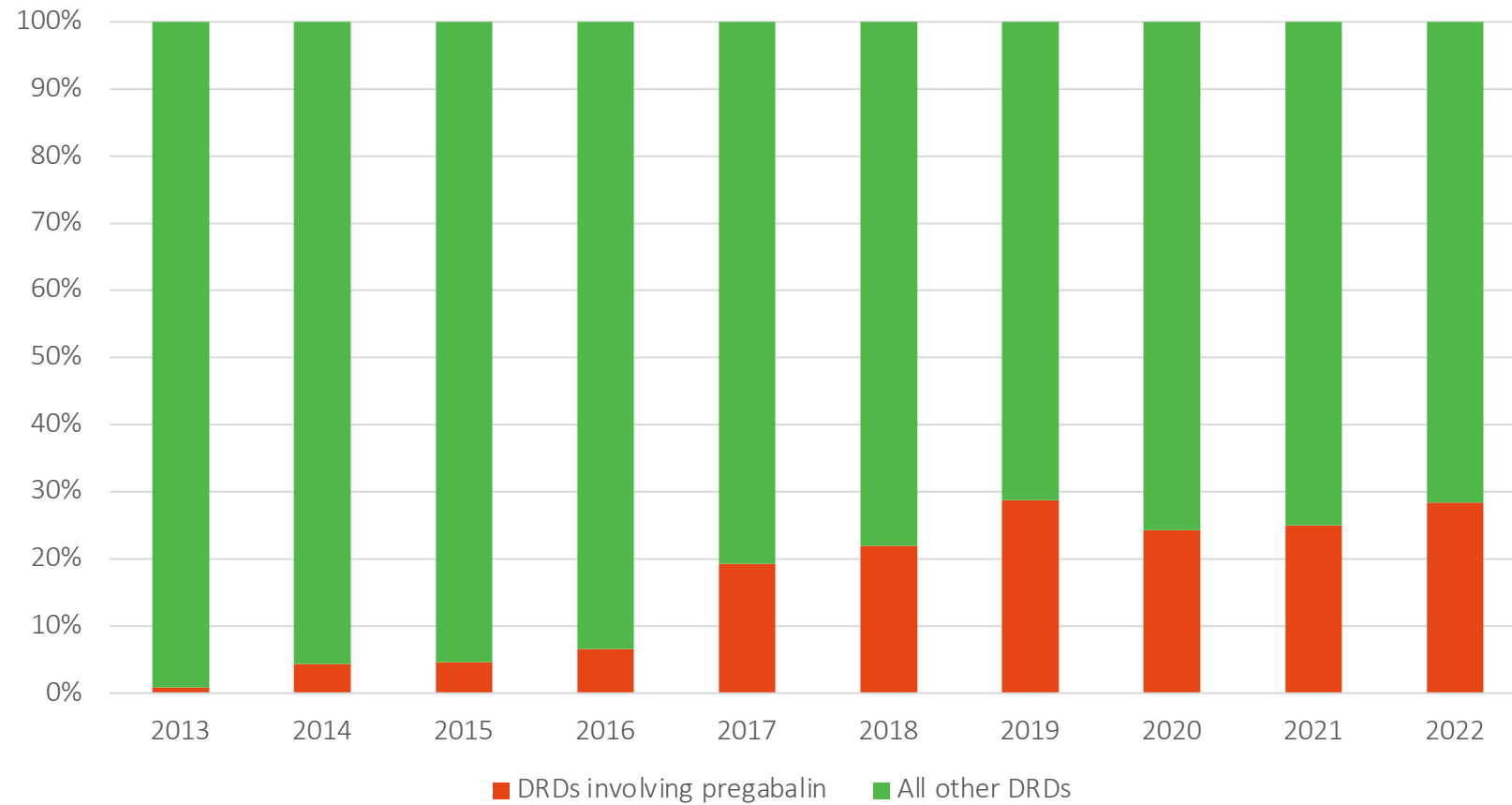
Deaths involving pregabalin in NI 2013-2022: NISRA (2023)



DRDs involving pregabalin - Proportion of overall DRDs: NISRA (2023)



% of DRDs involving pregabalin: NISRA (2023)



Diazepam v Pregabalin in NI

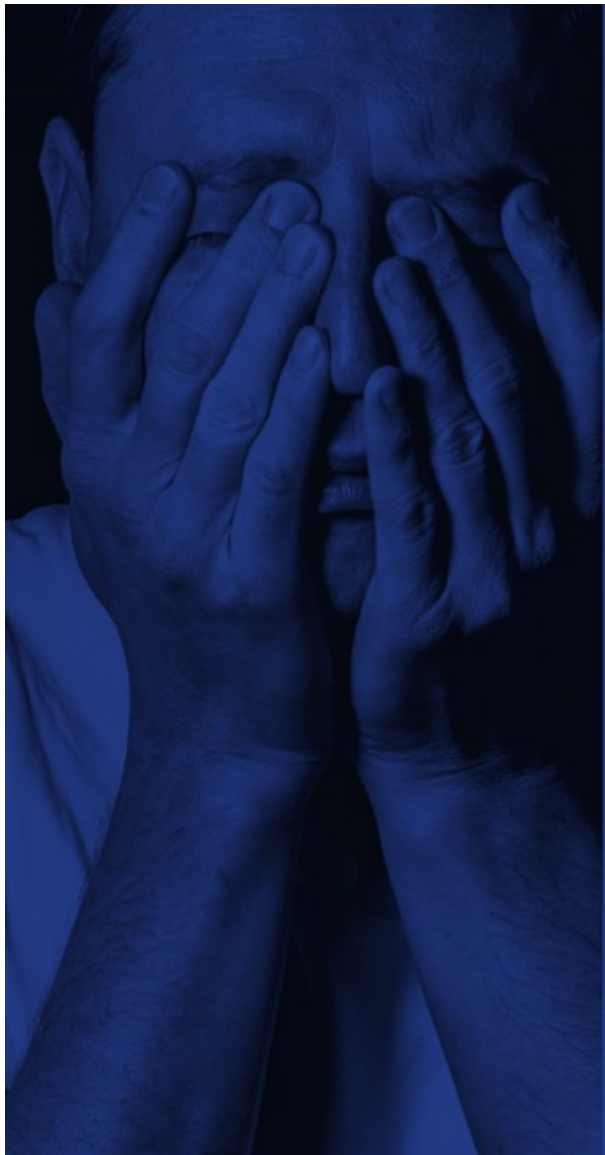
- Historically, diazepam is involved in more DRDs in NI than any other single drug
- Trend:
 - Diazepam deaths down
 - Pregabalin deaths up
- Deaths involving pregabalin in NI overtook diazepam in 2019 and have stayed higher ever since

Harm reduction advice

- Largely similar to that for benzos
- Avoid dependence with tolerance breaks
- If using alcohol, benzos or opioids as well, use less of each
- Avoid snorting and injecting
- Test dosing with a new supply and send one to WEDINOS
- Plan for overdose







- anger and irritability
- nausea and stomach cramps
- anxiety and panic
- restlessness
- sweating
- suicidal thoughts
- poor concentration
- sleep problems
- aches
- chills
- crying spells
- feeling like a zombie, unreal
- diarrhoea
- dizziness
- tiredness
- headaches
- hot flushes

Withdrawal symptoms

Managing withdrawal

- Depends largely on whether use is 'stable' e.g. as prescribed or 'unstable' e.g. daily dosing varies ('yo-yo' use)
- Achieve a stable daily dose
- Slow taper with flexible adjustments
- Expect similar symptoms to both benzo and opioid withdrawal
- Ask about mood & psychotic symptoms
- Often takes 6+ months

