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MEETING ABSTRACT

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Prescription of flunitrazepam in Austria, 2006–2014

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Background: Flunitrazepam is an intermediate acting benzodiazepine that causes strong anterograde amnesia. It has seen a long history of abuse, as a date-raping drug in the 1980s and as a combination to illicit opioids and amphetamines to ensure a “soft landing” after the “high”. Authorities in many countries have tried to overcome the illicit use of flunitrazepam. Since December 2012, the prescription of flunitrazepam requires schedule II standards (*Suchtgiftrezept*) in Austria.

Methods: Data from all prescriptions filled in Austrian pharmacies on public expense by outpatients (2006–2014) were obtained from the Federation of Austrian Social Insurance Institutions (*Hauptverband der österreichischen Sozialversicherungsträger*) and were analyzed for prescriptions of flunitrazepam using the WHO drug statistic methodologies.

Results: After a steady rise to 5.32 million daily doses in 2011, the number of daily doses filled after the introductions of restrictions on prescribing has significantly decreased to 2.06 million. These figures demonstrate the efficacy of the measures by the authorities.

Discussion: The dramatic fall in flunitrazepam prescription does not only demonstrate the illicit use of flunitrazepam but also the willingness of physicians to prescribe a potential drug of abuse without due diligence. To further decrease flunitrazepam abuse, further measures by the authorities (such as closing “back doors”) are required—many countries have banned flunitrazepam completely.

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