



25<sup>th</sup> November, 2022

Deputy, Peadar Toibin TD  
Dáil Eireann  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2.

**Re PQ No. 56255/22**

To ask the Minister for Health the number of persons being treated for addiction to anti-anxiety drugs in the State in each of the past ten years by age in tabular form.

**Re PQ No. 56256/22**

To ask the Minister for Health the number of persons being treated for addiction to sleeping pills in the State in each of the past ten years by age in tabular form.

Dear Deputy Toibin,

I refer to your above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

An analysis of the data provided in treatment services within the National Drugs Treatment Reporting System (NDTRS) (see information about the [NDTRS](#)). The below answer presents cases treated for benzodiazepines, z-drugs or pregabalin use from 2012 to 2021. It contains 2012 to 2021 data for:

- Cases treated for benzodiazepines as a main problem.
- Cases treated for benzodiazepines as an additional problem.
- Cases treated for benzodiazepines as a main or an additional problem.
- Cases treated for z-drugs as a main problem.
- Cases treated for z-drugs as an additional problem.
- Cases treated for z-drugs as a main or an additional problem.
- Cases treated for pregabalin as a main problem.
- Cases treated for pregabalin as an additional problem.
- Cases treated for pregabalin as a main or an additional problem.

A case may report problem use of more than one type of benzodiazepine or z-drug.

The cases included may have other drugs, alcohol, or other problems (such as gambling) as a main problem or additional problem.

Z-Drugs are non-benzodiazepine hypnotic sedative drugs, e.g., zolpidem, zopiclone.



NDTRS data for 2020 should be interpreted in the context of COVID-19. In 2020, there was an overall drop in the number of cases entering drug treatment which in part was the result of temporary service closures and measures introduced to comply with COVID-19 restrictions. This does not necessarily indicate a real decline in demand for treatment.

### Cases treated with a benzodiazepine as a main problem 2012 to 2021

From 2012 to 2021, 9,433 cases were treated for a benzodiazepine as a main problem (Table 1). The number of treated cases increased from 636 in 2012 to 1,218 in 2021, an increase of 91.5%.

Table 1: Number of cases treated for benzodiazepines as a main problem, by year, NDTRS 2012 to 2021											
	Year										
All cases	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*	2021	Total
Main problem	636	810	953	873	897	868	999	1082	1097	1218	9433

\* May be affected by public health restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic

### Cases treated with a benzodiazepine as an additional problem 2012 to 2021

From 2012 to 2021, 24,128 cases were treated for benzodiazepines as an additional problem (Table 2). The number of treated cases increased from 2,187 in 2012 to 2,529 in 2021, an increase of 15.6%.

Table 2: Number of cases treated for benzodiazepines as an additional problem, by year, NDTRS 2012 to 2021											
	Year										
All cases	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*	2021	Total
Additional problem	2187	2489	2684	2635	2438	2145	2312	2371	2338	2529	24128

\* May be affected by public health restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic

### Cases treated with a benzodiazepine as a main or an additional problem 2012 to 2021

From 2012 to 2021, 33,266 cases were treated for benzodiazepines as a main or an additional problem (Table 3). The number of treated cases increased from 2,801 in 2012 to 3,723 in 2021, an increase of 32.9%.

As some cases reported more than one type of benzodiazepine, figures presented here may differ from the combined total of the previous two tables.

Table 3: Number of cases treated for benzodiazepines as a main or an additional problem, by year, NDTRS 2012 to 2021											
	Year										
All cases	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*	2021	Total
Main or additional problem	2801	3271	3601	3478	3301	2988	3293	3417	3393	3723	33266

\* May be affected by public health restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic

## Cases treated with a z-drug as a main problem 2012 to 2021

From 2012 to 2021, 882 cases were treated for a z-drug as a main problem (Table 4). The number of treated cases increased from 43 in 2012 to a peak of 155 in 2014, before the number of cases decreased to 48 in 2018. From 2018, cases increased almost two-fold to 80 in 2021.

Table 4: Number of cases treated for z-drugs as a main problem, by year, NDTRS 2012 to 2021											
	Year										
All cases	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*	2021	Total
Main problem	43	73	155	154	103	82	48	72	72	80	882

\* May be affected by public health restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic

## Cases treated with z-drugs as an additional problem 2012 to 2021

From 2012 to 2021, 3,286 cases were treated for z-drugs as an additional problem (Table 5). The number of treated cases increased from 250 in 2012 to a high of 474 in 2015, before cases decreased to 203 in 2021.

Table 5: Number of cases treated for z-drugs as an additional problem, by year, NDTRS 2012 to 2021											
	Year										
All cases	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*	2021	Total
Additional problem	250	347	393	474	471	361	297	226	264	203	3286

\* May be affected by public health restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic

## Cases treated with z-drugs as a main or an additional problem 2012 to 2021

From 2012 to 2021, 4,167 cases were treated for z-drugs as a main or as an additional problem (Table 6). The number of treated cases increased from 293 in 2012 to 628 in 2015, before cases decreased to 283 in 2021.

As some cases reported more than one type of z-drug, figures presented here may differ from the combined total of the previous two tables.

Table 6: Number of cases treated for z-drug as a main or an additional problem, by year, NDTRS 2012 to 2021											
	Year										
All cases	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*	2021	Total
Main or additional problem	293	420	548	628	574	442	345	298	336	283	4167

\* May be affected by public health restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic

## Cases treated with pregabalin as a main problem 2012 to 2021

From 2012 to 2021, 175 cases were treated for pregabalin as a main problem (Table 7). The number of treated cases increased from less than 5 in 2012 to 40 in 2021. Cases treated for pregabalin as a main problem increased four-fold between 2016 (10) and 2021 (40).

Table 7: Number of cases treated for pregabalin as a main problem, by year, NDTRS 2012 to 2021											
	Year										
All cases	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*	2021	Total
Main problem	~	5	10	13	10	14	21	39	22	40	175

\* May be affected by public health restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic

## Cases treated with pregabalin as an additional problem 2012 to 2021

From 2012 to 2021, 475 cases were treated for pregabalin as an additional problem (Table 8). The number of treated cases increased from 0 in 2012 to a high of 97 in 2019. Treated cases then decreased to 80 in 2021.

	Year										
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*	2021	Total
All cases											
Additional problem	0	7	23	26	33	51	71	97	87	80	475

## Cases treated with pregabalin as a main or an additional problem 2012 to 2021

From 2012 to 2021, 650 cases were treated for pregabalin as a main or as an additional problem (Table 9). The number of treated cases increased from less than 5 cases in 2012 to 120 in 2021.

	Year										
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*	2021	Total
All cases											
Main or additional problem	~	12	33	39	43	65	92	136	109	120	650

\* May be affected by public health restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic

I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely,



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Joseph Doyle  
National Lead, Social Inclusion