

RAPID



Midazolam (Series 13)

Chair - Dr Peter Allcroft

Palliative Medicine, Respiratory & Sleep Physician
Southern Adelaide Palliative Services

Midazolam belongs to a class of medications called benzodiazepines, which produce a calming effect on the brain and nerves. It is thought to work by increasing the effect of a certain natural chemical (GABA) in the brain inducing sleepiness, decreasing anxiety and causing a loss of ability to create new memories. Midazolam first came into use in 1976. It is on the World Health Organization's List of Essential Medicines, the most effective and safe medicines needed in a health system. Midazolam is available as a generic medication and is not very expensive.

In the final stages of end-of-life care, midazolam is routinely used at low doses via subcutaneous injection to help with agitation, myoclonus, restlessness or anxiety in the last hours or days of life. At higher doses during the last weeks of life, midazolam is considered a first line agent in palliative continuous deep sedation therapy when it is necessary to alleviate intolerable suffering not responsive to other treatments, but the need for this is rare.

Attention should be paid to dosage, reduced doses being given to the elderly, patients on opioid medication, and patients with impaired liver or renal function. Additional caution is required in the elderly, as they are more sensitive to the pharmacological effects of benzodiazepines, metabolise them more slowly, and are

more prone to adverse effects, including drowsiness, amnesia (especially anterograde amnesia), ataxia, hangover effects, confusion, and falls. The risk of serious side effects (such as slow/shallow breathing, severe drowsiness/dizziness) may be increased if this medication is taken with other products that may also cause drowsiness or breathing problems.

This Series will provide us with information on the use of midazolam for agitation in the palliative population internationally, including dose ranges, benefits and harms.

To join this Series

- For new sites visit the website or contact the RAPID Research Assistant, Jane Hunt.
- For existing sites download the case report form and start data collection.

Contact

Jane Hunt

RAPID Research Assistant

PaCCSC - Palliative Care Clinical Studies
Collaborative

E: RAPID@uts.edu.au

W: <https://uts.edu.au/RAPID>

 [@pa_ccsc](https://twitter.com/pa_ccsc)