

Patient Information Leaflet: Benzodiazepines as sedation for scans

Following national recommendations it is now our Practice Policy to not prescribe benzodiazepines (eg. Diazepam, lorazepam) for use as sedation prior to having a scan. There are many reasons behind this change but below is a summary of what we feel are the most important reasons for you as patients to be aware of:

1) The responsibility for any prescribing of medication required for a scan or investigation being performed in a hospital setting rests with the clinician in charge of or overseeing that investigation. If the scan has been requested by a hospital clinician then they are responsible for prescribing and overseeing any sedation that may be required to enable you to access a scan. If your scan has been requested by a GP then please discuss with the GP who requested this whether you may be more suited for an alternative form of imaging, or potentially for using one of the open scanners which are available.

2) In law, the responsibility for any adverse reaction or outcome from a medication rests with the person who has prescribed that medication. As such we believe it is neither safe, nor appropriate to prescribe sedatives to be taken by a patient prior to an investigation where we will not be present, or which we will not have any control over.

3) Patients can respond very differently to the same dose of sedative and can either be particularly sensitive to these drugs and become over sedated, or react to them and become agitated, both of which are potentially unsafe.

The Royal College of Radiologists has published its own guidance “Safe Sedation and analgesia in the radiology department (2018)”, which in its summary states:

“Sedation techniques, together with good analgesia and sympathetic, supportive patient management can improve the patients’ experience by minimising the negative effects of the intervention and optimising patient outcome.

Safe and effective analgesia and sedation should be delivered by an appropriately trained and credentialed team with good access to anaesthetics, pre-procedure assessment, sedation plan and checklist, with appropriate monitoring and availability of resuscitation equipment and reversal agents”.

This document can be found online at:

<https://www.rcr.ac.uk/our-services/all-our-publications/clinical-radiology-publications/sedation-analgesia-and-anaesthesia-in-the-radiology-department-second-edition/>

Thank you for your understanding.