

Therapeutic Alternative to Clobazam: Medical Recommendation for Adults with Epilepsy

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Canadian Epilepsy Alliance agencies in Ontario received the following document from Dr. J.C. Martin del Campo, University Health Network and Dr. Jorge Burneo, London Health Sciences Centre:

In the last few weeks, it has become evident that there is a Province-wide scarcity of clobazam.

This is a drug classified as a benzodiazepine, therefore its abrupt withdrawal is contraindicated as it may result in the development of break-through seizures or status epilepticus.

In the last 2 weeks, repeated requests from pharmacies and patients are being received by Neurologists and other medical practitioners for a substitute while the product is made once again available.

Unofficial estimates of drug availability suggest late-February.

From the benzodiazepine group, only 2 other drugs have been found useful for the chronic management of seizure disorders: nitrazepam and clonazepam.

While there is no published evidence of efficacy under the circumstances, the most reasonable substitute for clobazam is clonazepam.

Accordingly, we recommend substituting every 20 mg of clobazam for 0.5 mg of clonazepam^{1,2}.

It is not known if this will be efficacious in all patients or if the recommended equivalent will result in a decompensation of the seizure disorder, but it is reasonable to surmise that it may prevent the development of a withdrawal state resulting in status epilepticus. Any given dosage will need to be carefully monitored by the prescribing physician and adjustments made where necessary.

While making these recommendations, it is hoped that the health authorities and pharmaceutical companies will protect the public by urgently implementing a strategic plan that will prevent such shortages from occurring. It is imperative to be reminded of the potentially fatal consequences of breakthrough seizures³.

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1. <http://www.benzo.org.uk/bzequiv.htm>

2. https://www.etherapeutics.ca/cps.showMonograph.action?newSearch=true&simpleIndex=brand_generic&simpleQuery=benzodiazepines&=&brandExactMatch=false#

3. Ther Clin Risk Manag. 2009; 5: 449-457