Did alprazolam use change?

In this study, we examined patterns of alprazolam use in the national IDRS samples in 2011-14 to examine the impact of regulatory restrictions in February 2014, where alprazolam was changed from a prescription-only (Schedule 4) to a controlled drug (Schedule 8), meaning that an authority prescription is required if a patient is declared ‘drug-dependent’ or if the medication is prescribed for more than 8 weeks.

In response to this, there was a national change in regulatory restrictions in February 2014, where alprazolam was rescheduled from Schedule 4 to Schedule 8, requiring an authority prescription. This rescheduling appears to have produced some reduction in extramedical use of the drug, with rates of illicit use among IDRS participants declining from one in three to one in four; price increasing and availability decreasing. However, two-thirds of those using alprazolam prior to the policy change remained users in 2014, and the relationship between the days of alprazolam use and days of crime involvement remains significant even after controlling for anxiety diagnosis and frequency of injecting drug use, despite controlling for IV frequency, unemployment.

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