

Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs

Technical Committee

11 March 2004

The Following extract has been taken from the minutes to the ACMD's Technical Committee's meeting on 11 March 2004 regarding its discussion on the reclassification / rescheduling of benzodiazepines.

Benzodiazepines

- The Chair introduced this agenda item and reminded the Committee the types of issues it would need to focus on as identified at its last meeting. This included the prevalence of counterfeit benzodiazepines and the effects of rescheduling temazepam and flunitrazepam.
- The Forensic Science Service informed the Committee that it did not collect data that could be used to accurately ascertain the levels of counterfeit benzodiazepines. Anecdotal evidence and the limited data they had on the issue suggested that there was not much evidence of illicit importation of benzodiazepines. Furthermore, although FSS had seized some counterfeit benzodiazepines, the levels seized did not suggest that there was a wide prevalence of counterfeit benzodiazepines.
- It was pointed out to the Committee that the difference in counterfeit products was increasingly hard to tell. The attention of the Committee was drawn to cases in Western Scotland, where counterfeit benzodiazepines known as 'French Blues' were reported to have been in circulation.
- The Home Office's Drugs Inspectorate informed the Committee that it did not collect data that could be used to give an accurate reflection of the effects of rescheduling temazepam and flunitrazepam and therefore it was not in a position to make an informed and evidenced based statement on the issue. It was brought to the attention of the Committee that evidence from Scotland suggested that rescheduling had resulted in the reduction of the illicit use of temazepam. However, it was pointed out to the Committee that the above interpretation of the effects of rescheduling was misleading. It was suggested that the reduction in the illicit use of temazepam in Scotland was more linked to the fact that the popularity of temazepam had declined since they were no longer available in gel format on the National Health Service.
- It was put to the Committee whether it would be effective in Scheduling all benzodiazepines in the same Schedule as temazepam. The Committee agreed that this would not be appropriate and would prove to be misleading as not all benzodiazepines were the same.
- Based on the evidence heard the Committee agreed that there was not sufficient evidence to suggest that benzodiazepines be rescheduled or reclassified. However, the Committee agreed that it would keep under review

the situation with regards to benzodiazepines and consider the issue further when the need arises.