

Reference:	FOI.4594.20
Subject:	Prescribing/dispensing of alprazolam (Xanax)
Date of Request:	24 November 2020

Requested:

Would it be possible to get information on the total number of items and quantities prescribed/dispensed in Wales for alprazolam/Xanax broken down by tablet strength (250mcg/500mcg), year (calendar or financial), and whether primary, secondary or tertiary care, for the period since 2000, please?

Response:

Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB) does not hold the information requested for all of the Health Boards in Wales. We therefore suggest you contact the other Health Boards in Wales directly for this information. Contact details for each of the Health Boards can be found via the following link: [Health in Wales | Local Health Boards](#)

The UHB is unable to provide you with all of the information requested as it is estimated that the cost of answering your request would exceed the “appropriate level” as stated in the Freedom of Information (Fees and Appropriate Limit) Regulations 2004. The “appropriate level” represents the estimated cost of one person spending 18 hours or (2 ½ working days) in determining whether the UHB holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

In order to provide you with the requested information, the UHB would need to undertake a manual trawl of pharmacy records scrutinise all incidents reports for the financial years 2000/01 to 2014/15, to identify any information that fulfils your request as this information was not recorded centrally at this time.

The UHB is therefore applying an exemption under Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI), which provides an exemption from a public authority’s obligation to comply with a request for information where the cost of compliance is estimated to exceed the appropriate limit.

Under section 16 of the FOI, we are required, as a public authority, to provide advice and assistance so far as it is reasonable, to individuals who have made a request under the FOI and therefore can provide you with some of the information requested.

The UHB provides, within the table below, the quantity of alprazolam issued and the number of issues, by tablet strength, for secondary care, for the financial years 2015/16 to 31 October 2020/21.

Financial year	Alprazolam - 250 micrograms		Alprazolam - 500 micrograms	
	Quantity issued (single tabs)	Number of issues	Quantity issued (single tabs)	Number of issues
2015/16	60	1	60	1
2016/17	805	3	120	2
2017/18	508	12	300	6
2018/19	92	2	60	1
2019/20	420	2	240	9
2020/21 (to 31 October)	0	0	180	3
Total	1,885	20	960	22

In accordance with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Guidance and the British National Formulary (BNF), Alprazolam tablets are not prescribable in NHS primary care and is only available via private prescription.