

Baclofen-related deaths in Australia 2000–2022

BACKGROUND

The therapeutic indication of baclofen is for voluntary muscle spasm suppression, but off-label use includes alcohol use disorder. Deaths related to baclofen have been reported.



METHODS

All cases of baclofen-related death in Australia, 2000–2022 aged ≥ 15 years were retrieved from the National Coronial Information System. Case characteristics, intent as determined by the coroner, toxicology and major autopsy findings were extracted from available reports.

RESULTS



MEAN AGE
45.6
YEARS

MALE
51%

DOCUMENTED IN CASES

- Mental Health Problems 73.5%
- Substance Use Problems 43.1%
- Specifically Alcohol Use Problems 38.2%
- Chronic Pain 37.3%
- Previous Self-harm or Suicide Attempt 30.4%
- Multiple Sclerosis or Spinal Injury 15.7%



CIRCUMSTANCES OF DEATH

Intentional Toxicity
54.9%

Unintentional Toxicity
30.4%

Unintentional Toxicity + Disease
9.8%

Accidental Injury
4.9%

TOXICOLOGY



Median baclofen blood concentration was 3.10mg/L

Prescribable psychoactive substances were present in almost all cases particularly antidepressants (69.8%) and benzodiazepines (64.6%).

CONCLUSIONS

Mental health and **alcohol and substance use problems** were prominent. **Caution** is needed in **prescribing baclofen**, given its potential to be used in **intentional and non-intentional overdose**.

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