



MENTAL HEALTH CLINICAL ADVISORY GROUP

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

December 2022

STAFFED BY:

HEALTH POLICY & ANALYTICS DIVISION

OFFICE OF DELIVERY SYSTEMS INNOVATION

About this report

ORS 414.359(6) requires the Mental Health Clinical Advisory Group to provide an annual report to the interim committees of the Legislative Assembly. The report outlines recommendations the MHCAG made to the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) the previous year, and it may include recommendations for legislation. The following report fulfills that requirement. Senate Bill 138, passed in 2019, extends the work of the MHCAG indefinitely.

About the MHCAG

The Mental Health Clinical Advisory Group (MHCAG) is comprised of 18 mental health professionals, consumers and advocates and has the following statutory obligations:

- Creating clinical practice resources and recommendations for the treatment of mental health disorders with mental health drugs.
- Developing evidence-based algorithms for the treatment of mental health disorders with mental health drugs.
- Making recommendations to OHA and the Pharmacy and Therapeutic (P&T) Committee.
- Recommending changes to any preferred drug list (PDL) overseen by OHA.
- Developing evidence-based treatment algorithms and clinical practice guidelines for the treatment of mental health disorders including, but not limited to, mental health drugs.
- Supporting the [Oregon Psychiatric Access Line](#) (OPAL), which offers a psychiatric advice line for prescribing providers statewide.

Additionally, the MHCAG must:

- Publish its approved recommendations within 30 days of approval, and
- Submit an annual report to interim committees of the Legislative Assembly

Further reading:

- Link: [Recommendations and resources published by MHCAG](#)
- Link: [MHCAG meeting materials and meeting minutes](#)

2022 MHCAG publications

MHCAG uses evidence to develop recommendations

MHCAG publications are sourced from peer-reviewed, evidence-based behavioral health and pharmacology literature. The primary sources of information are systematic reviews and randomized controlled trials. The MHCAG follows systematic [research methodology](#) when developing treatment algorithms and clinical guidance documents. Where there are gaps in evidence, the collective professional judgement from MHCAG membership is used.

MHCAG published fewer documents in 2022 than 2021 due to quorum challenges

The MHCAG met seven times during 2022 via a virtual meeting platform. Due to the inability to convene a quorum, multiple meetings were cancelled in 2022. Because of the meeting cancellations, the group published fewer documents in 2022 than in 2021.

The MHCAG published the following four clinical practice resources and recommendation documents in 2022:

1. [How to approach a benzodiazepine taper.](#)
This document provides clinicians with benzodiazepine tapering recommendations, example tapering schedules and information on how to manage benzodiazepine withdrawal symptoms.
2. [Talking with your patient about deprescribing benzodiazepines.](#)
This document provides guidance on how clinicians can explain the benefits a patient can experience once they have discontinued benzodiazepine use. This document also provides guidance on how to successfully deprescribe a benzodiazepine (e.g, set expectations, empower your patient, go slowly).
3. [The treatment of generalized anxiety disorder \(GAD\) with psychotherapy.](#)
This document provides information on cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), the first-line non-pharmacological treatment of generalized anxiety disorder. It also provides suggestions on what to do if CBT is not an option or is ineffective.
4. [“Patient guide to benzodiazepines”](#)
This document provides patients with an overview of benzodiazepines, symptoms of withdrawal, how to stop taking benzodiazepines and how to manage symptoms of anxiety.

The MHCAG reviewed scientific evidence and considered real-world practice dynamics encountered by patients and practitioners prior to voting to approve content for publication.

2022 Pharmacy & Therapeutics Committee consultation

The P&T Committee may request consultation of MHCAG for mental health treatments at any time. Upon a request, MHCAG members provide individual feedback on the requested topic but do not vote by consensus as a group. The Oregon State University Drug Use Research and Management (DURM) faculty, which contracts with OHA to manage drug policy for the fee-for-service Oregon Health Plan, collate the feedback from MHCAG members and present the recommendations to the P&T Committee.

In 2022, the MHCAG consulted the P&T Committee on off-label prescription dosing of medications used to treat Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) at the request of the P&T Committee.

In 2023, the MHCAG will present their work on major depressive disorder to the P&T Committee, in conjunction with the Committee's updated review of evidence for antidepressants.

P&T Committee information, including meeting minutes, can be found [here](#).

Future MHCAG work

MHCAG has committed to creating multiple clinical guidance documents each year. In 2023, MHCAG expects to publish additional clinical resources for the treatment of anxiety disorders.

Special thanks

OHA wishes to thank the all-volunteer MHCAG membership for their continued commitment to this work and the improvement of Oregon's behavioral health treatment system.