The background of the slide is a close-up photograph of several large, vibrant green leaves with prominent veins, set against a dark, almost black background. The leaves are slightly out of focus, creating a sense of depth and texture.

# The reduction of long-term use and misuse of benzodiazepines

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**“Mother needs something today to calm her down  
And though she’s not really ill  
There’s a little yellow pill  
She goes running for the shelter of a mother’s little helper  
And it helps her on her way, gets her through her busy day”**

The Rolling Stones  
“Mother’s little helper”  
1966



**mental health:  
context**

**12%** had  
**depressive** symptoms<sup>1</sup>

**9,5k** recorded cases of  
**domestic violence**<sup>2</sup>

**24,4**  
**suicides** per 100 000  
inhabitants (leading in the EU)<sup>3</sup>

**1%** depression cases are managed  
**non-pharmacologically**<sup>4</sup>

1. Lietuvos gyventojų sveikatos statistinio tyrimo rezultatai (2014);

2. Smurtas artimoje aplinkoje. Oficialiosis statistikos portalas;

3. Higienos instituto Sveikatos informacijos centras. Mirties priežastys 2018.

4. Buraitytė A., Butkutė B. Psichikos sveikatos prevencijos ir priežiūros poreikių ir patirties tyrimas: kiekybinė apklausa ir pusiau struktūruoti interviu <http://kurkl.lt/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Apklausos-analize-2018-08-10.pdf>

# high prevalence of disorders due to psychoactive substance use

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**7,7** per 1000 of population was the rate of disorders due to **psychoactive substances**

**85%** related to **alcohol** consumption<sup>5</sup>

# continuously expanding net of mental health services in primary care

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**1** mental health center for **25,6k** of population

**1** psychiatrist for **14,4k** of population

**1** psychologist for **12,9k** of population

**underdeveloped role of mental health nurses**

# **treatment of drug dependence**

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**psychiatrists' competency**

**5 dependence treatment centers**

**inpatient and outpatient**

**covered cost**

**services/treatment**

alcohol abstinence syndrome

12-step program

relapse prevention

motivational therapy



# high prevalence of mental health problems

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**70%** receive no treatment

main **contributing** factor is mental health **stigma**<sup>6</sup>

**drug-therapy** is the most **popular** treatment



**benzodiazepines  
(BZD)**

**sedative-hypnotic** properties

**short-term** treatment: **2-4 weeks**<sup>7</sup>

indications: **insomnia, anxiety**, muscle relaxation<sup>7,8</sup>

7. Benzodiazepines I: upping the care on downers: the evidence of risks, benefits and alternatives. J Clin Med. 2018 Feb; 7(2):17

8. Griffin C.E., Kaye A.M., Rivera Bueno F., et al. Benzodiazepine pharmacology and central nervous system-mediated effects. Ochsner J. 2013 Summer; 13(2): 214-223.

# troubling side effects of BZDs

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increased risk of **accidents**, including **falls**

**dependence** (psychological and physical)

**withdrawal syndrome**<sup>7,8,9</sup>

7. Benzodiazepines I: upping the care on downers: the evidence of risks, benefits and alternatives. J Clin Med. 2018 Feb; 7(2): 17

8. Griffin C.E., Kaye A.M., Rivera Bueno F., et al. Benzodiazepine pharmacology and central nervous system– mediated effects. Ochsner J. 2013 Summer; 13(2): 214–223.

9. Discontinuation Strategies for Patients with Long-term Benzodiazepine Use: A Review of Clinical Evidence and Guidelines. Rapid Response Report: Summary with Critical Appraisal. Ottawa (ON): Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health; 2015 Jul 29.

1

**Benzodiazepinai:  
Lietuvos analizė**

Enrikas Etneris  
Dr. Valva Gerasimavičiūtė  
„Kurk Lietuvai“ programa, 2018



# situation analysis in Lithuania

# first thorough analysis of BZD use in Lithuania

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**1 in 5** used **sedative-hypnotics** at least once<sup>10</sup>

the average duration of use – **86 months**<sup>11</sup>

**38%** BZD users show **dependence**<sup>11</sup>

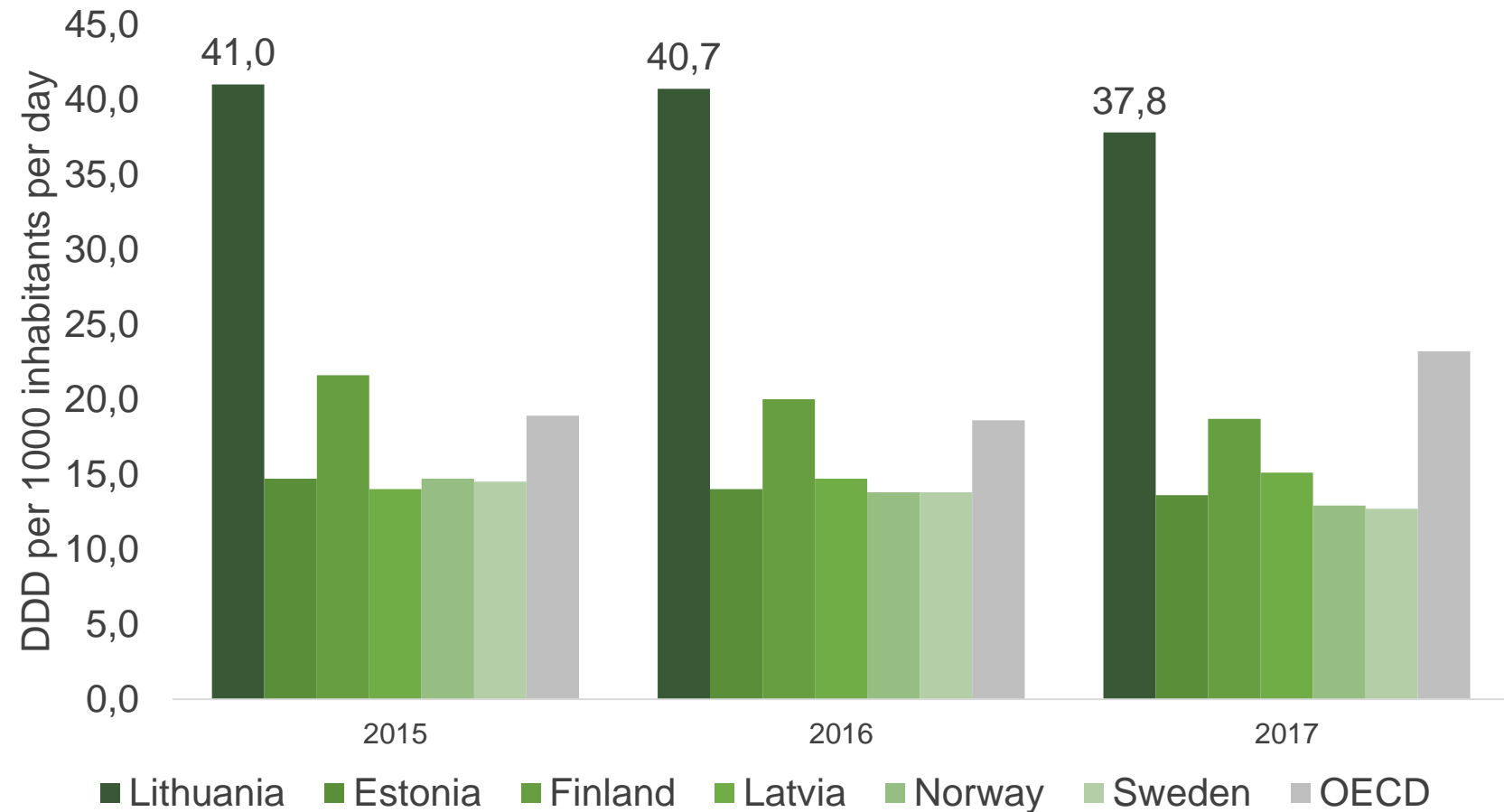
10. Narkotikų, tabako ir alkoholio kontrolės departamentas. Psichoaktyviųjų medžiagų vartojimo paplitimas Lietuvoje 2004-2016 metais.

11. Aranauskas R., Vaičiulienė L. Šeimos gydytojo pacientų, vartojančių benzodiazepinus, priklausomybės išsivystymo tendencijos. Sveikatos mokslai/ Health sciences in Eastern Europe. 2018, 28 tomas, Nr. 2, p. 95-100

# BZD consumption in Lithuania is twice as big as the average consumption in OECD countries

4%

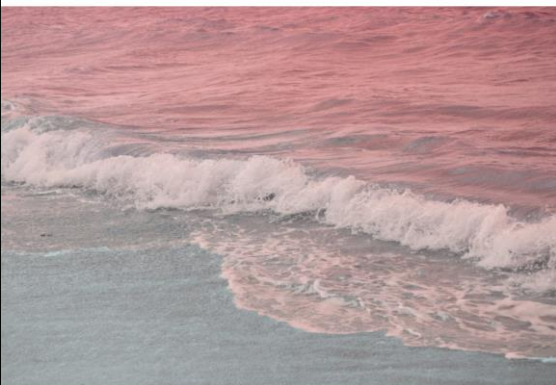
of the population consume BZDs every day



2

**Benzodiazepinai:  
Ekspertų nuomonė**

Enrikas Eitneris  
Dr. Vaiva Gerasimavičiūtė  
„Kurk Lietuvai“ programa, 2018



**expert opinion**



# factors related to benzodiazepine misuse

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## patients

do not know about the risks  
quick fix  
„feels good“

## physicians

symptom-oriented treatment  
threatened by long-term users  
lack of knowledge about  
tapering

## system

insurance-covered  
paper prescriptions  
black market

3

**Benzodiazepinai:  
Užsienio gerųjų  
praktikų pavyzdžiai**

Enrikas Etneris

Dr. Valva Gerasimavičiūtė

„Kurk Lietuvai“ programa, 2018



**examples of good  
practices**

# what works?

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## **education of patients**

clinician letter  
public campaigns

## **education of physicians**

prescribing to a new patient  
alternatives  
dose tapering

## **systemic changes**

driving  
compensation policy

5

**Benzodiazepinai:  
Kompleksinių  
priemonių rinkinys**

Enrikas Etneris

Dr. Valva Gerasimavičiūtė

„Kurk Lietuvai“ programa, 2019



**result: guidelines  
for BZD reduction  
and misuse**

# 12 proposed measures

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- prescription and tapering guidelines
- physician training on how to interact with dependent patient
- compensation policy
- prescriptions limited to 1-2 week supply
- lower doses of diazepam
- educate physicians on depression diagnosis and treatment
- adapt and validate diagnostic scales
- electronic prescriptions only
- insomnia management and CBT
- patient resources (progress calendar, tips)
- public campaign

# BZD prescription and tapering guidelines developed



# communication plan

flyers (good sleep, BZD risks)

conference for physicians

articles in press

## **Benzodiazepinai: Komunikacijos planas**

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**future**



# **BZD consumption will decrease twice by 2022**

average of the OECD countries

## **the risks**

proposed measures will stay "on paper"

prescription and tapering guidelines might be viewed as a control mechanism of physicians

## **continuity**

Department of Mental Health at the MoH

Department of Pharmacy at the MoH

# thank you

More information about the project: [www.kurklit.lt](http://www.kurklit.lt)



MINISTRY OF HEALTH  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

