

New Mexico Medical Board Ketamine Policy

Adopted: September 23, 2022

Over the past decade, the use of ketamine has expanded beyond anesthesia and pain management in surgical, hospital and emergency departments. Evidence has grown that this medication, as well as an enantiomer, esketamine, seem effective in the treatment of psychiatric disorders.

The use of these medications in the treatment of depression and possibly other mental illnesses is evolving, but usually entails using lower doses administered by IV, IM, subcutaneously, oral and intranasal routes. Guidelines for the use of these medications have been published but still indicate some variability and the need to establish effective dosing and delivery methods.

While ketamine is an approved medication for anesthesia, its use for mental health treatment is off-label so is subject to the clinical and ethical guidelines the NMMB has opined on previously. Ketamine is also a controlled substance, with a risk for abuse and the development of a substance use disorder for extra care in its use is warranted.

It is becoming apparent from the national press and medical publications that ketamine is being provided by medical providers for reasons outside of the treatment of legitimate medical illnesses as well as for illnesses outside their area of expertise.

This is a concern of the board, as we are compelled by the Medical Practice Act to:

“Protect the public from the improper, unprofessional, incompetent and unlawful practice of medicine...”

Therefore in the interest of promoting the safe, effective and ethical practice of medicine, the NMMB offers the following guidance in the use of ketamine.

1. If ketamine is being offered as a treatment, it must be for the treatment of a legitimate, medically-recognized illness.
2. Ketamine must be offered as a treatment only if there is a reputable research basis for its use for a particular diagnosis, and is administered as outlined per protocols developed by the relevant professional society.
3. Before being considered as a candidate for ketamine treatment, the patient must be evaluated and diagnosed by a physician with expertise in the diagnosis and treatment of the patient's condition.
4. Ketamine must be integrated into a complete treatment plan for the patient's condition.
5. Ketamine should be administered only by a provider that has been trained in its use.
6. Safety measures for the use of this medication must be in place for managing both immediate, short-term and long-term side effects, to include on-going follow-up once ketamine treatment ends.

Using ketamine outside these guidelines may subject licensees to investigation for violations of the Medical Practice Act and its regulations.