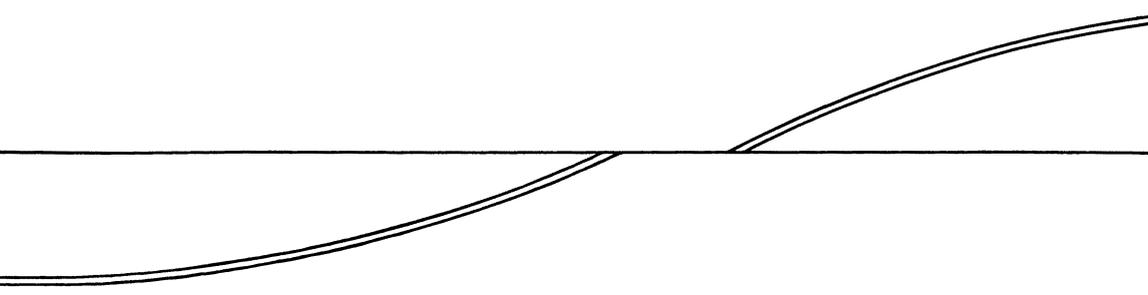


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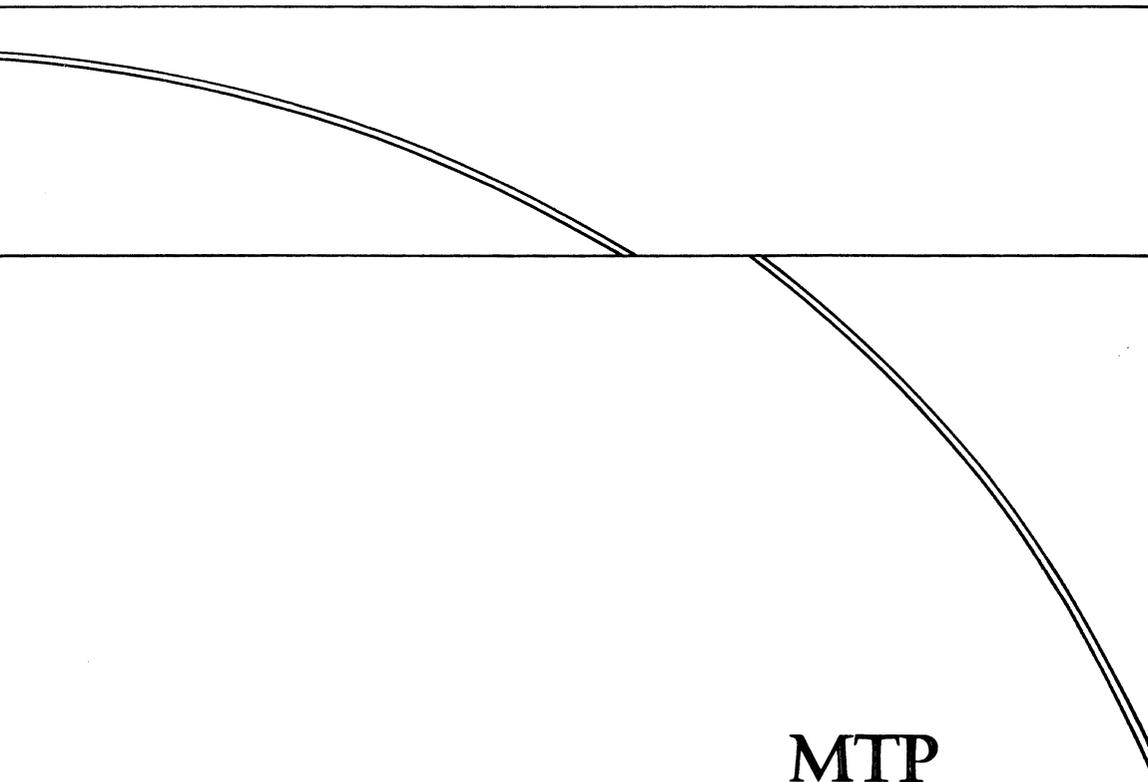


The Benzodiazepines

Use, overuse, misuse, abuse

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Foreword

The story of the benzodiazepines is a fascinating one: the synthesis of a long series of inert compounds and the abandonment of the project: months later, the renewal of the project and the discovery that this compound RO5-0690 (Librium®) was a sedative and muscle relaxant in laboratory animals: the recognition that its postulated structure was wrong and that it was in fact a member of an entirely new chemical class: the excitement caused by the discovery of the powerful taming effect of the drug in wild animals: the even greater excitement in medical circles when its dramatic anxiety relieving effects were established in humans: the subsequent enormous world-wide use of drugs of the benzodiazepine group.

I have reason to know the story well for during that period I worked in various capacities in research, marketing and management in the British subsidiary of F. Hoffmann-la Roche. It was during this period that I became interested in whether dependence on benzodiazepines could occur and if so to what extent, but felt that this could be examined best from outside the concern. Having now retired from Roche back to academic medicine I have taken the opportunity to examine and analyse the evidence.

Although this has been an independent analysis, and I take full responsibility for any poor deductions or conclusions, I should like to express my thanks to Hoffmann-la Roche for the information sources they have made available to me that helped to find cases in obscure publications that I might otherwise have missed. I should particularly like to thank John Ward on their staff who helped cross-check cases which had been published and also recorded in official records. But any errors of commission or omission are mine alone.

Cambridge,
February 1978

JOHN MARKS