The use of benzodiazepines, sleep aids, and other controlled substances are commonly used to help manage mental health concerns such as insomnia and anxiety. While the use of these medications may be helpful in the short-term, long-term use or abuse can lead to significant health and mental health issues. The Integrative Health Program is a cross-discipline treatment clinic that aims to help students safely discontinue the use of these medications while also providing non-pharmaceutical, evidence-based treatments to address the underlying mental health concern. We work alongside medication providers to provide the best standards of care for students seeking treatment within our clinic.

What approach do we use in the Integrative Health Program?
In the Integrative Health Program, CAPS and Campus Health providers work together to create an individualized treatment plan for each participant. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), a first-line, evidence-based treatment approach, is our primary non-pharmaceutical intervention. CBT is tailored to each mental health concern to effectively target your symptoms. If you are using a benzodiazepine, sleep aid, or other controlled substance, treatment will also include the development of an individualized taper plan to safely discontinue the medication at a pace that works for you.

**How does it work?**

The foundation of CBT treatment is that our thoughts, feelings and behaviors interact with each other to create our emotional experiences. Sometimes, we develop styles of thinking or behaving that inadvertently cause difficulties in our life; these difficulties can sometimes lead to the development of a mental health condition. CBT works by helping you to identify how your thoughts and behaviors may have gotten you "stuck" in an unhelpful pattern and uses evidence-based skills to help you to make the changes needed to get you unstuck. For conditions like insomnia, this may mean using behavior modification to encourage healthier sleep habits and reset your sleep patterns. For anxiety, this may mean teaching cognitive strategies to develop more helpful styles of thinking or using behavior experiments to learn more about the situations that cause you anxiety.

If you are using certain medications to cope with your mental health concern, your providers work together to create a safe and manageable plan to reduce and, ideally, discontinue your need for the medication. As you learn new non-pharmaceutical skills your medication dose will be reduced until, ultimately, you feel confident in your ability to manage your symptoms without the need for medication.
Who is a good fit for the program?

The Integrative Health Program is currently accepting referrals. Students that are a good fit for the program typically struggle with mental health concerns such as insomnia and anxiety.

- Insomnia- If you have been having trouble falling asleep or staying asleep for a month or more, you may be eligible for the Integrative Health Program, regardless
of whether or not you are taking medication (prescribed or over the counter)

- Anxiety- If you are experiencing anxiety in any form (e.g., panic, social anxiety, general anxiety) and are currently being prescribed a benzodiazepine or other controlled substance in order to manage your symptoms, you may be eligible for the Integrative Health Program

- Other conditions- If you are experiencing a mental health concern and are also being prescribed a benzodiazepine or other controlled substance to manage your symptoms, you may be eligible for the Integrative Health Program

How can I get connected with the program?

If you are interested in being treated within the Integrative Health Program, ask your Campus Health or CAPS medication provider for a referral.

What are some sleep tips that I can use right now?

More strategies for better sleep can be found in the self-help section of the CAPS website [1].

Who can I contact for more information?

If you would like more information about the Integrative Health Program, please contact Cherish Williams, Ph.D. at cherishw@unc.edu [2] or Anna Lock, Psy.D. at alln@email.unc.edu [3].

Source URL: https://caps.unc.edu/services/integrative-health-program

Links
[1] https://caps.unc.edu/self-help/sleep
[2] mailto:cherishw@unc.edu
[3] mailto:alln@email.unc.edu