Dear Colleague,

We are not able to assist with your request for us to prescribe sedative medication prior to an imaging procedure in your hospital.

We will outline our concerns, which will hopefully explain our refusal to provide such a prescription:

1. Small doses of benzodiazepines such at 2mg diazepam are probably sub-therapeutic for most adults for any effective sedation. Conversely anxiolytics can have an idiosyncratic response in patients, and even very small doses can cause increased agitation in some subsets of patients.
2. A patient may take a sedative ‘an hour’ before their assumed procedure, to then attend the hospital to find their procedure has been delayed, therefore the timing of the anxioyltic being sub-optimal.
3. GPs are not regularly involved or trained in acute sedation for procedures
4. All hospital consultants, both those requesting imaging and those providing it, have access to the same prescribing abilities as GPs. If a patient needs a certain medication to enable an investigation to go ahead, they are just as well positioned to provide a prescription, either through the hospital pharmacy or a hospital FP10.
5. Sedated patients should be regularly monitored and I have been made aware of a case where a GP-provided sedative was given, the patient not monitored, and subsequently had a respiratory arrest in an MRI machine.
6. The Royal College of Radiologists‘ own guidelines on sedation for imaging makes no mention of GP involvement or provision of low dose anxiolytics and stresses the importance of experienced well trained staff involved and the monitoring of sedated patients: <https://www.rcr.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/Safe_Sedation.pdf>

The clinical director for radiology in Swansea Bay, Dr Toby Wells (Toby.Wells@wales.nhs.uk), has confirmed that patients should not be advised to contact their GP for sedation. If a patient fails to tolerate a scan, he has suggested that the referrer is informed and advised they will have to arrange sedation themselves if they wish to reattempt.

This position is not intended to be obstructive, but to simply adhere to our duty to provide safe, consistent, and appropriate care for our patients. We are also supported by our statutory representative body Morgannwg LMC

We would be grateful if you could discuss this with your radiology colleagues to see if a pre-procedure guideline could be formulated which provides you with the necessary arrangements to ensure imaging goes ahead in these most challenging patients.