

Press Release

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Physician-Pharmacist Collaboration May Increase Cooperation with Opioid Addiction Treatment

Recent research from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) indicates a team-based approach to the treatment of Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) may improve buprenorphine care. A collaborative approach to treating opioid use disorder that relies heavily on community pharmacists is feasible and may increase adherence and participant satisfaction, according to the study as part of the National Institutes of Health, through the NIDA Center for the Clinical Trials Network.

Most people with OUD who would benefit from medication do not receive it. Buprenorphine is a safe and effective medication that has been used in opioid addiction treatment for nearly two decades, but providers must complete training and receive a special waiver in order to prescribe buprenorphine to treat opioid use disorder. In the United States, fewer than 10% of primary care providers are authorized to prescribe buprenorphine, and more than 20 million people in the United States live in a county without a buprenorphine-waivered physician. This lack of access is a significant barrier to treatment, especially to people in underserved communities.

To help address treatment gaps, researchers studied the transfer of care of 71 participants using buprenorphine maintenance therapy for opioid use disorder from waived physicians to trained community pharmacists. About 90% of people in the United States live within five miles of a community pharmacy. Nearly 89% of participants remained in the study and 95.3% adhered to the daily medication regimen. During the 6-month trial, no opioid-related emergencies or hospitalizations were reported. The proportion of opioid-positive urine drug screens was less than 5% at month 6 among participants who completed all urine drug screens in the study. Participants, physicians, and pharmacists alike reported high rates of satisfaction with the program. Additionally, researchers recruited 71 adults currently receiving office-based buprenorphine treatment for opioid use disorder. Six physicians and six community pharmacists took part in the trial. The initial treatment phase, in which the buprenorphine dose is gradually increased until a satisfactory daily dose is reached, was carried out under the care of a waived physician. Then, participants attended monthly maintenance visits in which pharmacists dispensed buprenorphine, assessed how well the medication was working, and provided counseling and

referrals to specialists as needed. Pharmacists then provided feedback to the partnering physician to adjust buprenorphine dosage as needed.

The researchers concluded that the study offers strong support for advancing physician-pharmacist team-based approaches to leverage the abundant resource of community pharmacies in expanding access to opioid use disorder treatment with buprenorphine. Larger clinical trials are needed to establish strategies and approaches to most effectively implement team-based buprenorphine care and respond to the needs of diverse clinical settings and populations.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) is a United States federal-government research institute whose mission is to "lead the Nation in bringing the power of science to bear on drug abuse and addiction". For more information please visit www.drugabuse.gov.

The SAFE Glen Cove Coalition is conducting an opioid prevention awareness campaign entitled, "Keeping Glen Cove SAFE," in order to educate and update the community regarding opioid use and its consequences. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or visit SAFE's website to learn more about the Opioid Epidemic at www.safeglencove.org.