

Research That Matters

Drug and Alcohol Dependence Report: Reduced Emergency Department Use Among Insured Individuals Receiving Extended-Release Buprenorphine in a Health System Setting

Research Summary

This research found that patients treated with an extended-release medication for opioid use disorder (OUD) had fewer emergency department (ED) visits for all causes following initiation. Additionally, patients experienced reduced inpatient treatment episodes and shorter lengths of stay.

STUDY DESIGN

- Retrospective observational study
- Included 99 continuously insured patients receiving extended-release buprenorphine
- Evaluated changes in healthcare utilization before and after medication initiation

STUDY FINDINGS

- **Reduction in ED visits:** Patients had fewer all-cause ED visits post treatment.
- **Decreased inpatient admissions:** Fewer inpatient treatment episodes and shorter hospital stays.
- **Treatment continuity challenges:** Financial concerns, including cost and insurance coverage lapses, were primary barriers.
- **Harm reduction benefits:** Some patients continued opioid use during treatment, highlighting the importance of maintaining engagement in care and ongoing harm reduction strategies.
- **Supports prior research:** Findings align with clinical trial data demonstrating the effectiveness of the medication in reducing healthcare utilization.

STUDY LIMITATIONS & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- **Non-randomized, observational design:** Limits ability to confirm causal relationships.
- **Limited sample diversity:** Generalizability is restricted; future research should explore racial and ethnic disparities in treatment access and outcomes.
- **Need for further research:** Future studies should identify which patient populations benefit most and address financial/access barriers.

Clinical Implications of the Research

FOR PAYERS

- Reduced ED visits and inpatient utilization may have implications for healthcare costs, though additional economic evaluation is needed.
- Findings may support consideration of broader access to extended-release medications for appropriate patients.

FOR PROVIDER ORGANIZATIONS & HEALTH SYSTEMS

- Routine use of certain extended-release medications could improve resource allocation and reduce strain on emergency and inpatient services.
- Health systems should advocate for insurance coverage and financial support to improve treatment access.

FOR CLINICAL PROFESSIONALS

- Continued treatment engagement, even when patients experience ongoing opioid use, may support harm reduction and ongoing recovery efforts.
- Providers should integrate extended-release medications into long-term treatment plans for OUD patients.

FOR CONSUMERS

- Extended-release medications may reduce treatment burden and support ongoing engagement in care.
- Patient education on the benefits and realistic expectations of extended-release medications is essential to improving adherence and reducing stigma.



Administrative & Business Implications

FOR PAYERS

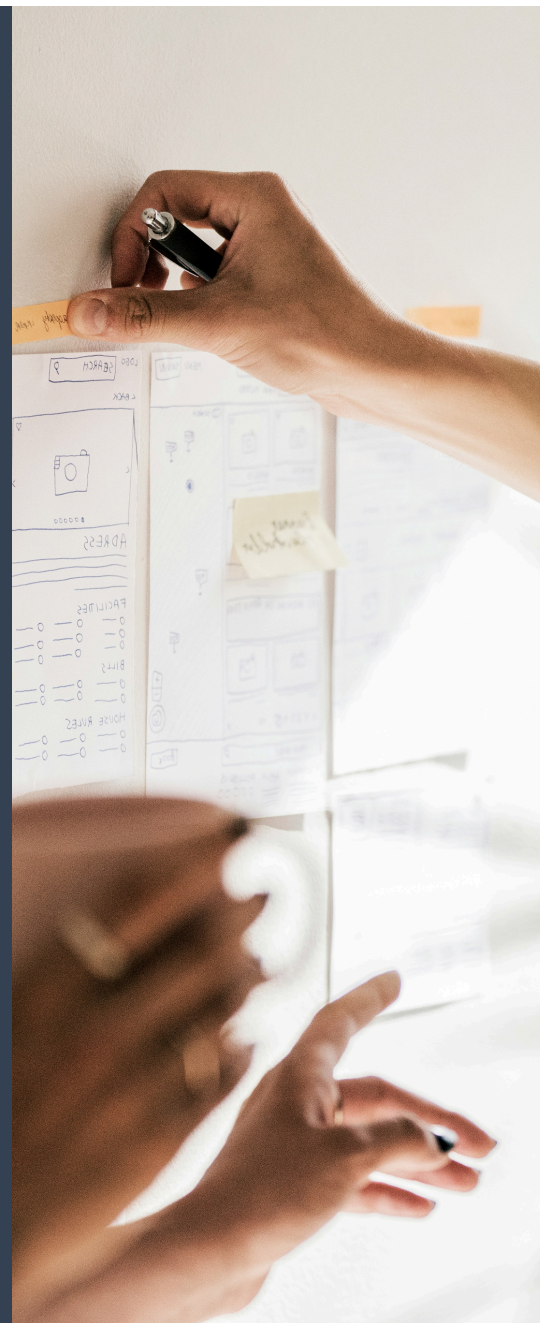
- Expanding extended-release medication coverage could lower overall healthcare expenditures.
- Addressing financial barriers may enhance treatment adherence and patient outcomes.

FOR PROVIDER ORGANIZATIONS & HEALTH SYSTEMS

- Improved resource utilization with fewer ED visits and hospitalizations.
- Tracking outcomes as part of quality improvement initiatives may influence reimbursement models and policy changes.

FOR CLINICAL PROFESSIONALS

- Providers should advocate for better insurance coverage and patient support services to improve treatment adherence.
- Educating clinical teams on the benefits can enhance integration into broader treatment models.



Other Considerations

- **Integration into Broader Treatment Models:** Certain extended-release medications may be incorporated into collaborative care models involving primary care, behavioral health, and pharmacy services.
- **Quality Metrics & Reporting:** Health systems may track utilization and patient outcomes for quality improvement and policy advocacy.
- **Patient Engagement & Education:** Increasing awareness and education on extended-release medication benefits could improve adherence and reduce stigma related to medication-assisted treatment.



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REFERENCES

PubMed Central: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11063592/>

Authors: Bobbi Jo H. Yarborough et. Al. Kaiser Permanente, Northwest Center for Health Research, Portland, Oregon