

Buprenorphine in the VA (BIV PROJECT): Improving Implementation and Outcomes of Office Based Opioid Dependence Treatment in the VA

A Tool for Buprenorphine Care

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(The first of a series of monthly letters containing information on Buprenorphine)

Assistance Available

Along with the Substance Use Disorder Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (SUD-QUERI), Center for Substance Abuse Treatment and Education (CESATE), and Program Evaluation and Resource Center (PERC), we are pleased to announce that expertise is now available to assist in developing buprenorphine treatment at your sites. Clinical and staffing experts are available to assist you in establishing buprenorphine care at your sites and to provide ongoing assistance as your care commences. Two methods for achieving this have been developed. We have initiated a telephone "help line" regarding how to implement buprenorphine in the VA. Persons with questions and comments can e-mail or call Tykia Andrée, a research project coordinator familiar with buprenorphine use at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. A buprenorphine resource guide that contains information on the medication, how to set up treatment with buprenorphine in your practice, and other helpful information has been developed and will be provided to you and your site. Our goal is to help your site make an easy transition to care of opioid dependent patients. Please contact Tykia Andrée (tykia.andree@va.gov, 412-365-4138) with questions or to request a buprenorphine resource guide be sent to you.

Shadowing an Experienced Buprenorphine Provider

Shadowing...

After having several requests from sites to set them up with experienced buprenorphine prescribers to shadow, the Buprenorphine Consult Service has made it a priority to find those experienced providers who are willing to allow doctors/nurses to shadow them.

If you are interested in becoming a site who hosts visits, please let the Consult Service know (see contact information below).

If you are interested in shadowing an experienced buprenorphine prescriber, please contact the Consult Service so that we might connect you with a person in your region. The shadowing experience has been helpful to some. For example, Terri, a nurse, relates her experience:

The Testimony...

"I spent half a day with Albuquerque, NM Buprenorphine clinic RN, Susan. She was a great help. She was awesome. She helped calm my initial fears about starting the program. My own thoughts of how to begin the program were confirmed with my visit. I had an opportunity to observe patient interaction. Susan was helpful especially with letting me express my concerns and ideas. I have been working on my patient tracking grids and policies. I feel more confident now and am looking forward to greeting my first patient."

Buprenorphine Listserve

If you are not already aware, we would like to bring to your attention that a National Buprenorphine Listserve is available for those people who are working with patients taking buprenorphine or interested in starting to prescribe buprenorphine. The listserv is an e-mail distribution list managed by Robert Dewey (Robert.Dewey@va.gov). This listserv is perfect for asking other sites questions pertaining to patient difficulties, tips, etc. Please contact Mr. Dewey to be added to the list.

Tip of the Month

When providing suboxone, it is helpful to instruct the patient not to talk, place the suboxone underneath the tongue, and to also refrain from talking while the medication is dissolving. It may take up to 5 minutes before the medication dissolves. Some patients find it helpful to drink some water prior to medication administration and have a mint to help with the sometimes bitter taste of the medication. It may be helpful to have the patient put his or her chin to their chest - this helps pool saliva in the front part of the mouth and reduce interaction with the "bitter" taste buds near the back of the mouth. When the patient is being induced for the first time, it may be helpful to use this quiet opportunity to have them review any office policies or procedures.