

A Tool for Buprenorphine Care

(A series of monthly newsletters about buprenorphine treatment)

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BUPRENORPHINE IN THE VA

In Fiscal Year 2007, among 128 Veteran Health Administration facilities, 35,240 patients were diagnosed with an opioid use disorder. Of those, 27.3% received any opioid agonist therapy: 22.2% received opioid agonist therapy in licensed/formal clinical settings and 5.1% received office-based treatment with buprenorphine. Substantial facility-level variability in proportions of patients treated with any opioid agonist therapy exist: ranging from 0% to 66% with 44% of facilities treating <5% [Oliva EM, Harris AH, Trafton JA, Gordon AJ. Receipt of opioid agonist treatment in the Veterans Health Administration: facility and patient factors. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*. 2012;122(3):241-6.].

OUTSIDE THE VA

We regularly review sources of information provided to us by staff and patients. Recently, both a clinician and a patient indicated a web site that provided up-to-date information about illicit drug prices. Streetrx.com is an online resource for prescription medication prices sold “on the street”. Pricing is reported by individuals and is anonymous. The web site has four sections: “Did You Get a Good Deal,” “See What Other’s Paid,” “Latest Prices,” and “Map.” “Did You Get A Good Deal?” allows the user to enter city, state, drug, and price information. For example, buprenorphine 8mg tablet was being sold between \$4 and \$17.50 across the country and a 50mg methamphetamine tablet was being sold for \$10 in Miami. The price information allows the purchase to be ranked with one to five dollar signs indicating the scale of expense for the exchange. The exchange can also be rounded out with the source of the item, date of purchase, and type of pricing (bulk or pharmacy). You can also upload a picture of the drug being sold. Interestingly, there is an optional question about the last time the user has been to the doctor. “See What Others Paid” allows a search of the existing database. The search field automatically intuits the search term based on the spelling of the item and offers various formulations. “Latest Prices” shows recent information that has been posted to the site. The “Map” shows a geographical representation of all entries (default), of a drug of choice exchange listed in the Good Deal, or of a drug search. Providers would be encouraged to explore Streetrx.com to be aware of the non-clinical market in a given area and to be reminded that clinical means are not the only way to access prescription drugs. Obviously, this is not an accurate representation of street value of a particular drug in a particular location.

MEDICATION-ASSISTED ADDICTION TREATMENT IN THE NEWS

- 1) [BioDelivery Sciences - Positive Results from BEMA Bup/Naloxone \(BNX\) Pharmacokinetic Study](#)
- 2) [Summit Looks At Solutions For Prescription Pill Abuse](#)

RESEARCH UPDATE

- 1) *J Subst Abuse Treat*. 2012 Jun 14. [Epub ahead of print] [Medically assisted recovery from opiate dependence within the context of the UK drug strategy: Methadone and Suboxone \(buprenorphine-naloxone\) patients compared.](#) McKeganey N, Russell C, Cockayne L. **TAKE HOME POINT:** In this preliminary study “...prescribing methadone or Suboxone for eight continuous months was highly effective for initiating abstinence from heroin use, and for converting short-term abstinence to long-term abstinence.”
- 2) *Drug Alcohol Depend*. 2012 Jun 13. [Epub ahead of print] [Inability to access buprenorphine treatment as a risk factor for using diverted buprenorphine.](#) Lofwall MR, Havens JR. **TAKE HOME POINT:** “...improving, rather than limiting, access to good quality affordable buprenorphine treatment may be an effective public health strategy to mitigate buprenorphine abuse.”

