

## **Patients' decisions to initiate long-acting injectable buprenorphine for opioid use disorder: qualitative study**

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**Introduction:** Long-acting injectable buprenorphine (LAIB) can potentially address many limitations of other forms of opioid replacement therapy (ORT). This presentation builds upon the concept of the 'informed patient' to explore individuals' decisions to initiate LAIB.

**Method:** Data derive from a qualitative study of 26 people with opioid use disorder who were interviewed within 72 hours of starting LAIB. Participants (18 men, 8 women) were recruited in 2021/2022 from drug treatment services in England and Wales. Interviews were conducted by telephone and analysed via Iterative Categorization.

**Key Findings:** Four interconnected factors influenced participants' decisions to initiate LAIB. These were: 1. receiving sufficient information to trust LAIB; 2. current treatment not meeting their personal needs or goals; 3. frequently uncritical perceptions of LAIB; and 4. restricted access to LAIB making participants feel grateful for having been selected to receive the treatment. Overall, participants said they had enough information and knowledge to decide they wanted LAIB. However, dissatisfaction with current ORT, desire for better treatment, and LAIB's limited availability seemed to hinder informed decision-making.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** Patients require accessible and relatable information in a range of formats and opportunities to ask questions, but their decision-making regarding LAIB initiation is also shaped by wider issues. Dissatisfaction with current ORT, patients' desire for a life-changing treatment, and the limited availability of LAIB may all increase the treatment's appeal, but not necessarily in ways that empower patients to make informed choices.

### **Implications for Practice or Policy:**

Opioid use disorder and its associated problems cannot be solved by any single pharmaceutical product. We therefore need increased access to all forms of ORT, alongside other resources and interventions, so patients never feel they have to rush into any medication without sufficient preparation.

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