

Exploring consumer experience and satisfaction with depot buprenorphine formulations: A mixed-methods study

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Introduction: The introduction of depot buprenorphine for the treatment of opioid dependence allows for reduced frequency of administration compared to conventional medication assisted treatment of opioid dependence (MATOD), such as oral methadone and sublingual buprenorphine-naloxone. Reduced dosing frequency is perceived to reduce issues associated with conventional MATOD, such as high out-of-pocket costs, the requirement to attend pharmacies frequently for treatment, stigmatisation of patients within mainstream healthcare settings, and the risk of diversion for unsanctioned opioid use. This study aims to explore the experiences reported by patients receiving depot buprenorphine from a publicly operated South-Australian drug and alcohol service.

Methods: Participants were recruited from the service over a 5-week period in 2021. Twenty-Eight participants consented to be involved in a mixed methods quantitative verbal survey and qualitative interview process.

Key Findings: The majority of participants reported satisfaction with their treatment with depot buprenorphine across the domains of efficacy, convenience, and global satisfaction. Perceptions of depot buprenorphine were commonly grounded in previous unfavourable experiences MATOD provision through community pharmacies. Thematic analysis identified that patient perceived benefits of depot buprenorphine were increased convenience, reduced stigmatisation, reduced contact with other people who use drugs and reduced illicit drug use due to the inability to 'skip' doses of methadone or buprenorphine-naloxone. Reduced contact and disconnection from healthcare services was seen as a potential issue for some participants when first initiating depot buprenorphine.

Discussions and Conclusions:

This study reinforces the significant perceived therapeutic, social and financial benefits of depot buprenorphine, whilst highlighting issues of current conventional MATOD therapy provision through community pharmacies.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

The authors report no declarations of interest.