SERVICE USER EXPERIENCES OF LONG-ACTING INJECTABLE BUPRENORPHINE (LAIB) IN NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA: A COMMUNITY-LED QUALITATIVE STUDY

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Background
Long-acting injectable buprenorphine (LAIB) has reshaped opioid treatment programs in Australia. Clinical trials have established the pharmacological efficacy of LAIB, however, qualitative evidence reveals variation in users experiences. We aim to explore knowledge, choice, and agency as necessary components of an informed LAIB service user.

Methods
Our descriptive qualitative study undertook purposive, community-led recruitment to conduct semi-structured interviews by telephone, with twenty participants between June and December 2022. We used reflexive thematic analysis, refining themes through fluid, recursive inductive coding. We used the Socio-Ecological Model (SEM) as a structuring device to frame LAIB user experiences and perspectives. We acknowledge first author subjectivity, positionality and active role in co-producing knowledge with participants in generating data.

Results
LAIB service users describe their experience as a trajectory, with outcomes tempered by wider OTP service conditions and shifting care, networks and support. Users describe their treatment efforts, hopes and goals as fluid and evolving over time but limited by provider-driven arrangements and constraints. Treatment conflict arose for LAIB users underpinned by their sense of agency and capability to exercise control and autonomy over their life journey. Tension between harm reduction and abstinence motifs affect LAIB treatment trajectories, particularly when viewed as a 'recovery project' within wider societal expectations.

Conclusion
LAIB must attend to informed choice, person-centred care, transparent communication and the therapeutic alliance; avoiding perceived coercive treatment transitions and ensure LAIB expands, not limits, treatment autonomy. LAIB reduces user-provider interaction, re-shaping opioid treatment outcomes largely by how LAIB users are able to assess and utilise what options are available to them. Overall, the LAIB experience is shaped more by the OTP structures and socio-legal contexts than by LAIB itself changing life trajectories.

Disclosure of Interest Statement
Charles Henderson has no disclosures