



# Acceptability of buprenorphine as a treatment for opioid use disorders: Experiences of health providers in Indiana rural counties

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# Main Findings

*Overarching themes:*

## **Barriers:**

- **Knowledge Gap:** Myths and misconception about buprenorphine
- **State-funded Insurance:** Complex administrative processes

## **Facilitators:**

- Post-COVID-19 **policy changes** to support **telehealth**
- **State- and county-level coalitions** for stakeholders involved in recovery



# Introduction and Methods

- ❑ Indiana lags in adopting MAT compared to many other states in the Midwest (Ray et al., 2017).
- ❑ This ongoing qualitative study uses medical (72.4%) and non-medical (27.6%) providers' narratives to explore barriers and facilitators of buprenorphine – an approved Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT).
- ❑ 29 semi-structured interviews were conducted via Zoom and phone.
- ❑ Population of six rural counties from which participants were sampled ranged from 192,000 –192,939 (County Health Ranking Road Map, 2020).
- ❑ Data analysis was conducted using inductive coding that included open, axial, and thematic coding.



## Results : Barriers to acceptability of buprenorphine

Theme	Sub-themes	Quotes
Disconnect between knowledge about MAT and its intended practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <i>Conceptualization of MAT as drug only rather than a combination of pharmacology treatment and therapy.</i></li></ul>	<p><i>“So, it’s abstinence based. And a lot of people in those programs will say that you’re not clean.”</i></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <i>Preferred pathways to recovery:</i>  Certain individuals are making the decision as to what “clean” and “recovery” should look like.  <i>Risk compensation: resale and misuse of buprenorphine</i></li></ul>	<p><i>“There’s a lot of fear of misuse of the medication, which can be very stigmatizing.”</i></p>



# (Cont'd) Results: Barriers

Theme	Sub-themes	Quotes
<b>Perceived bias about SUD misuse</b>	Fear of increased visibility of SUD in communities	<i>“ Not In My Backyard... people that will want to start a drug treatment program and people will automatically feel that their property values are going to go down.”</i>
<b>Complex insurance navigation for providers and clients</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="653 674 1271 769">▪ Strict administrative requirements</li><li data-bbox="653 824 1271 919">▪ Added responsibilities for providers</li></ul>	<i>“[A] lot of them are living kind of in poverty, because they know if they go and get employment – if they gain employment, then they could lose it.”</i>



# (Cont'd) Results: Facilitators

Theme	Sub-themes	Quotes
<b>Creation of multi-organizational SUD initiatives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Joint messaging and campaigns about SUD</li></ul>	<i>"... recovery community, themselves, have been the ones that have strengthened our recovery community."</i>
<b>Insurance program provides a pathway to consistent treatment and recovery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <i>Affordability:</i> rural residents have low income</li></ul>	<i>"Oh, significantly. I think – I think almost all of the clients I refer to MAT are on HIP."</i>
<b>Increased accessibility to patients via Telehealth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Telehealth has helped in addressing transportation challenges</li></ul>	<i>"[W]e had to go to a lot of virtual options, which has been a hindrance, but also, a benefit for some patients."</i>



# Future Directions

Further research should focus on the consistent, recurring theme that the core barrier for adoption of buprenorphine in rural Indiana is the misconception of MAT.

There was a supplemental concern that county- and state-level health systems and infrastructure are not set up to support treatment of Substance Use Disorder or mental health.

Researchers might also benefit from focusing on facilitators and how they can be used to address barriers – especially how multi-organizational teams can support evidence-based perception of MAT.



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