

Expansion of Buprenorphine Provision: How About Psychologists?

Adelya Urmanche, Zoe Chiu, & Marissa Marcus



Background

- Interest in prescriptive authority for psychologists is growing in the United States, as well as other countries.
- Psychologists specializing in the treatment of substance misuse and substance use disorders (SUDs) are often left out of these conversations -- considered “forgotten providers” (Hughes et al., 2023).
- Provision of buprenorphine, a gold-standard medication for Opioid Use Disorder, is currently prohibited for most prescribing psychologists.
- As states move forward in implementing prescriptive authority, it is crucial to include the voices of addiction psychologists.

Purpose

In order to inform New York State (NYS) legislation and provider training needs, this qualitative study aimed to describe addiction psychologists' attitudes toward prescribing buprenorphine, focusing on barriers and potential opportunities, and identify key recommendations for optimal implementation.

Methods

This is a **preliminary** analysis of the first 12 interviews.

- NYS-licensed addiction psychologists were recruited through listservs
- Participants participated in ~45 minute virtual interview
- Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and edited to ensure accuracy
- Responses were coded using Dedoose, then organized into themes

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Conclusion

The **preliminary analysis** highlights addiction psychologists' nuanced perspectives. While they strongly believe in the potential benefits of prescribing buprenorphine and medications more broadly, significant concerns emerge about training, regulatory burden, ethical considerations, professional identity, and collaboration with medical colleagues. Their recommendations stress careful implementation through ongoing training, clear oversight, integrated care, and addressing systemic issues like stigma and accessibility.

References

1.Hughes, P. M., Phillips, D. C., & Fagan, E. B. (2023b). Prescribing psychologists: Forgotten providers in the battle against opioid use disorder. *Addiction*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.16204>