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Patient Perspectives on Medication Assisted Therapy in Vermont
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BACKGROUND

- Medication-Assisted Therapy (MAT) for opioid addiction has increased in Vermont over the past 10 years, supported by a novel “Hub and Spoke” system that integrates specialty treatment centers (“Hubs”) with primary care offices (“Spokes”).
- Vermont has the highest per capita use of buprenorphine-based MAT in the US.
- Barriers to successful MAT include: transportation, stigma, waiting time, insurance coverage, and others.
- Studies of patient perspectives of MAT have identified social barriers (interference of treatment with work, school, or life obligations); rigid program rules; concerns about withdrawal and relapse as common causes of premature discontinuation of treatment.
- In contrast, patients have reported a high-level of satisfaction with primary care office-based MAT.

METHODS

- Project goal: To elicit patient perspectives on barriers and enablers of successful MAT in Chittenden County, Vermont
- Guided interviews of 44 patients enrolled in MAT for opioid addiction at the 2 hubs of the Chittenden Clinic in Burlington, VT were conducted in October 2016.
- Questionnaire items were developed based on previous literature and discussion with program leadership, staff and clinicians and community stakeholders.
- Responses were organized using thematic content analysis.

RESULTS

4. System

- Having a highly functioning treatment system and good social supports were important enablers of success
- 31/44 (70%) felt they understood the MAT system, though navigating the system was difficult when initiating treatment
- 30/44 (68%) had no issues with clinician availability
- 10/44 (23%) reported some negative experiences

5. Social Support & Stigma

- 36/44 (82%) felt well-supported to prevent relapse
- 23/44 (52%) felt they were supported by healthcare professionals
- 16/44 (36%) did not feel supported by healthcare professionals, feeling disrespected at times (both at MAT centers and other settings such as the Emergency Department)

6. Self-Efficacy

- 26/44 (59%) defined success as staying sober
- 12/44 (27%) defined success with feeling a sense of independence
- 18/44 (41%) highlighted at least one source of stigma

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Develop a quantitative questionnaire for deployment across the statewide MAT system.
- Assess and understand common comorbid conditions and how they affect success in the program.
- Compare patient and provider perspectives to further inform system improvement and allocate resources effectively.
- Explore better ways to integrate social support services with substance abuse programs to create a unified system.
- Offer provider education on effective approaches to meet the needs of patients.

REFERENCES