

# Lessons Learned From Buprenorphine Telehealth During COVID-19: A Guide For Providers

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ASAM Virtual 2021

# Disclosure Information (Required)

- ◆ Rachel S. Wightman, MD
  - ◆ No Disclosures
- ◆ Michael J. Lynch, MD
  - ◆ No Disclosures
- ◆ Erin A. Zerbos, MD
  - ◆ No Disclosures
- ◆ Hannah Snyder, MD
  - ◆ No Disclosures
- ◆ Jessica L. Taylor, MD
  - ◆ No Disclosures

# Learning Objectives (Suggested)

- ◆ Understand telehealth MOUD regulations for buprenorphine treatment both before and during the COVID-19 public health emergency
- ◆ Review existing evidence for telehealth delivered MOUD
- ◆ Discuss the range of MOUD clinical telehealth practice models borne out of COVID-19, benefits and limitations of each model, and any clinical concerns that have arisen
- ◆ Describe current proposed federal legislation to advance telehealth MOUD and expand access to care

# Introductions

- ◆ Rachel S. Wightman, MD

Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine  
Alpert Medical School of Brown University  
Director of Medical Toxicology Education



- ◆ Emergency Medicine, Medical Toxicology, Addiction Medicine
- ◆ Co-Founder Rhode Island Buprenorphine Hotline

# Introductions



- ◆ Michael J. Lynch, MD
  - Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine and Pediatrics
  - University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine
  - Medical Director, Pittsburgh Poison Center
  - Medical Director, UPMC Health Plan Substance Use Disorder Services
  - University of Pittsburgh
- ◆ Emergency Medicine, Medical Toxicology, Addiction Medicine
- ◆ UPMC Medical Toxicology Telemedicine Bridge Clinic
- ◆ Co-Founder, Addiction Medicine Consult Service at UPMC Presbyterian



# Introductions



- ◆ Erin A. Zerbo, MD
  - ◆ Assistant Professor of Psychiatry
  - ◆ Rutgers New Jersey Medical School
    - ◆ Psychiatry Consultation-Liaison Service at University Hospital
  - ◆ Associate Director of Medical Student Education in Psychiatry
  - ◆ Vice President of the New Jersey Psychiatric Association

# Introductions



- ◆ Jessica L. Taylor, MD
  - ◆ Assistant Professor of Medicine, General Internal Medicine
    - ◆ Addiction medicine, HIV
  - ◆ Medical Director, Faster Paths Bridge Clinic
  - ◆ Director, HIV Prevention Services
  - ◆ Boston University School of Medicine & Boston Medical Center

# Introductions



- ◆ Hannah Snyder, MD
  - ◆ Assistant Professor, Family Community Medicine
  - ◆ University of California San Francisco at Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital
    - ◆ Primary Care and Addiction Medicine
  - ◆ Co-Principal Investigator, California Bridge Project





Rhode Island  
Buprenorphine Induction  
Telehealth Hotline  
401-606-6060



University of  
Pittsburgh

CA   
BRIDGE  
TREATMENT STARTS **HERE**

RUTGERS HEALTH

 CENTER  
BOSTON  
MEDICAL



POLLING QUESTION 1

**In your practice have you ever used telehealth to prescribe buprenorphine?**

**A. YES**

**B. NO**

## POLLING QUESTION 2

**If yes, what form did you use?**

**A. Audio Only / Telephone**

**B. Audiovisual**

**C. Both**

# Questions for the Panel

- ◆ Please submit any questions you have in the chat!



## LEGAL CONCERNS

**Can I initiate treatment  
without an in person visit?**



LOGISTICS

**What are the benefits of  
audiovisual platform?**

**Limitations?**



LOGISTICS

**What are the benefits of  
telephone only encounters?**

**Limitations?**



## LOGISTICS

**Will I be reimbursed for SUD  
treatment provided via  
telehealth?**





## LOGISTICS

**Do you have advice for  
streamlining  
registration/intake processes  
via telehealth?**



## LOGISTICS

**The patient fails to login to the telehealth appointment.  
What steps should I take?**



LOGISTICS

**How do you obtain consent for  
treatment via telehealth?**



## POLICY

**What if a patient expresses suicidal ideation or overdoses during the telehealth encounter?**



## LOGISTICS

**What should I do if the  
telehealth technology fails  
during the visit/cuts out?**



POLICY

What if you cant obtain a  
UTOX?



## PROCEDURES

**For providers that offer both telehealth and in person visits, have you seen patterns in utilization of either service?**

## PROCEDURES

**How can I see someone  
without vital signs?**





## GENERAL

**Since you started telehealth practice are there any changes you have made to your workflow?**



## PROCEDURES

**What if your telehealth  
patient doesn't make it to  
follow up?**



## TROUBLE SHOOTING

**For patients at high risk for return to use and overdose, what strategies can you use via telehealth to reduce risk?**

## TROUBLE SHOOTING

**How do you reduce risk of buprenorphine diversion when seeing patients via telehealth?**

## PROCEDURES

**Do you obtain pregnancy tests  
for patient initiating  
treatment with telehealth?**



## PROCEDURES

**How many telehealth visits  
would be okay to have without  
an in person visit?**

## LOGISTICS

**How do you document a  
telehealth visit appropriately?**



## TELEHEALTH CASE

**28 yo M with OUD.**

**You saw him last week for a telehealth visit for buprenorphine initiation.**

**He calls today reporting a lost RX.  
What do you do?**



## TELEHEALTH CASE

40 yo F with OUD.

You prescribed buprenorphine for unobserved initiation. She took 4 mg of buprenorphine and is now calling to report worsening withdrawal.

## TELEHEALTH CASE

**22 yo F G1P0 at 14 weeks.  
Presents requesting  
buprenorphine initiation via  
telehealth. Hx IV heroin use  
daily.**

## TELEHEALTH CASE

**50 yo M on methadone  
maintenance.**

**Presents to SUD Telehealth  
Clinic requesting transition to  
buprenorphine.**



## TELEHEALTH CASE

**19 yo F with OUD.**

**Patient reports snorting  
fentanyl daily last use this  
morning (6 hours ago).**

**Wants to start on  
buprenorphine.**

# Final Takeaways/Summary (Suggested)

- ◆ It is important to be able to offer different treatment access options for patients.
- ◆ Telehealth delivery of MOUD can improve patient access to treatment.
- ◆ For patients with limited internet access, lack of smart phone, and/or housing instability MOUD treatment can be provided via telephone.

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