

Medication assisted treatment is option for opioid use disorder

December 12 2017, by Olivia Ramirez

Of the 20.5 million Americans 12 or older that had a substance use disorder in 2015, two million had a substance use disorder involving prescription pain relievers and 591,000 had a substance use disorder involving heroin, according to the American Society of Addiction Medicine. That's over 2.5 million Americans who are in need of assistance treating opioid use disorder.

One evidence-based treatment option available is medication assisted treatment (MAT). Like the word assisted in the name suggests, MAT is meant to be provided in conjunction with counseling and other services that aid patients in reducing some of the stressors that can lead to active addiction. Programs like PATHways in the University of Kentucky College of Nursing are an example of that. In addition to MAT the program offers counseling, peer support and other [health care services](#).

The type of medication commonly used for opioid use disorder is called buprenorphine. It is provided to patients at intervals that are determined by their doctor. The medication can be delivered as a film placed under the tongue or a pill but research is being conducted to find alternative delivery routes such as implants or injections.

In order to provide MAT, there are several requirements a physician must meet; those requirements are set by the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). First, the prescriber must be licensed under state law, they must register with the DEA and complete training and/or certification.

Providers must all be able to refer patients to counseling or other services. There are also restrictions on how many patients a doctor can treat using MAT, during the first year of securing the DEA waiver, providers can treat up to 30 patients, after the first year they can apply to treat up to 100 patients and after the second year they can apply to treat up to 275 patients.

The [opioid epidemic](#) has impacted every corner of the United States, especially rural communities that have difficulty accessing medical care, but there are options available for helping those in active addiction enter recovery.

Provided by University of Kentucky

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