

New lockbox helping curb opioid addiction

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Credit: University of South Florida

Addiction treatment centers have long had trouble retaining patients in medication assisted treatment. However, medication-assisted treatment is an approach used for addiction recovery that utilizes medications like Suboxone, Vivitrol, and Methadone to reduce opioid cravings, withdrawals and illicit drug use. It has been shown to cut the risk of opioid overdose in half. Even if they are motivated, many have difficulty with transportation and cannot afford the cost of medications, which

often leads to premature discontinuation.

That's why the University of South Florida (USF) is exploring a new way of delivering [medication](#) assisted [treatment](#) that can be accessed remotely. Kathleen Moore, PhD, research professor in the Department of Mental Health Law and Policy at USF, is the co-investigator, along with Zev Schumann-Olivier, MD at Cambridge Health Alliance (CHA) of a \$2.25 million grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to study the effectiveness of a technology-based mobile device platform entitled MySafeRx. The overall goal of this project is to use MySafeRx to recruit and retain more clients in medication-assisted treatment.

MySafeRx is a multifaceted program, which includes a medication lockbox that can only be opened with a code from one of the program's mobile recovery coaches. Participants are required to check in with a coach daily for videoconferencing coaching sessions, during which they discuss daily recovery goals, are assessed for safety, and provided a code to unlock their lockbox and access their Suboxone medication.



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"We know that [opioid addiction](#) is a serious public health problem that has reached epidemic levels in the United States," said Moore. "Opioid overdose deaths have increased by over 400% since 1999 and are now a leading cause of premature death. When people with [opioid](#) addiction step down from either prison, inpatient detoxification (detox), or residential treatment, the risk of overdose death is particularly high. This is why we are utilizing a detox center here in Tampa along with the MySafeRx program. Prior studies of MySafeRx have demonstrated high levels of medication adherence among high-risk young adults and shown 50% reduction in illicit opioid use," said Moore.

Moore is recruiting clients with opioid addiction from the Agency for Community Treatment Services (ACTS) outpatient detox location in Tampa, the only locked detox facility in Tampa that also accepts patients admitted under the Marchman Act (a form of legally mandated treatment for people considered at risk to themselves or others due to substance use). ACTS detox is an ideal setting for this research because it is state-funded and provides a secured locked detox environment for some of the county's most vulnerable clients.

She and her team of USF researchers that include Co-Investigators Khary Rigg, PhD and Holly Hills, PhD along with graduate student Amanda Sharp (MI trainer) and Melissa Carlson (Research Specialist) are targeting participants prior to being discharged and incentivizing them with this innovative solution to medication delivery. Transportation and conflicts with employment are usually a barrier to patients accessing medications like Suboxone because they require frequent, often daily visits to the clinic. But with MySafeRx, participants can receive wrap-around coaching services to help address psychosocial challenges with their recovery, while also receiving their medication from the comfort of their own home.

Provided by University of South Florida

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