

# Buprenorphine prescription fills for OUD plateau during pandemic

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(HealthDay)—The number of individuals filling buprenorphine

prescriptions for opioid use disorder (OUD) has plateaued but not decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a research letter published online Dec. 21 in *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

Thuy D. Nguyen, Ph.D., from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and colleagues used data from the retail pharmacy claims from Symphony Health to examine trends in total U.S. retail pharmacy sales of buprenorphine products between May 1, 2019, and June 28, 2020, excluding the week of March 8 to March 15.

The researchers found that the weekly number of individuals filling [prescriptions](#) of buprenorphine indicated for OUD increased steadily from 172,165 in May 2019 to 216,939 in March 2020 (26.01 percent increase), as did the weekly number of individuals filling prescriptions of any type (8.78 percent increase). There was a significant decline (0.50 percent) in the weekly [growth rate](#) in the level of prescription fills between the prepandemic and pandemic periods. Overall, for all filled prescriptions, the growth rate declined by 0.57 percent between the prepandemic and pandemic periods. During the pandemic period, filled prescriptions for [buprenorphine](#) paid in cash significantly declined in both the level and growth rate, but there were no significant changes in filled prescriptions paid by Medicaid. Similar patterns were seen for prescriptions paid by Medicare and commercial plans.

"Efforts to engage patients with OUD via telehealth may have helped retain patients who otherwise would have discontinued treatment," the authors write.

**More information:** [Abstract/Full Text](#)

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