

# Outpatient buprenorphine dispensing up during COVID-19

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(HealthDay)—In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was

an increase in the number of patients receiving an outpatient buprenorphine prescription in Texas, according to a research letter published in the Dec. 15 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Jessica Duncan Cance, Ph.D., from RTI International in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, and Erin Doyle, from the Texas State Board of Pharmacy in Austin, assessed if changes in federal regulations corresponded with changes in outpatient [buprenorphine](#) dispensing in Texas. Data from the Texas Prescription Monitoring Program were used to identify buprenorphine dispensed for opioid use disorder among in-state patients 90 days before and after the declaration of a public health emergency on March 13, 2020.

The researchers found that after the emergency declaration, there was an increase in the number of patients filling buprenorphine compared with the 90 days before the declaration. There were no significant changes noted in the number of prescribers, but the number of new patients increased, while the number of existing patients declined. The total [number](#) of outpatient buprenorphine [prescriptions](#) decreased, while mean days of supply per prescription increased. There was an increase observed in electronic prescribing (from 38.56 to 46.49 percent). A comparison to trends in 2019 indicated that these changes in 2020 were not due to seasonal or secular trends.

"The association found between relaxation of federal regulations and [positive changes](#) in outpatient buprenorphine dispensing in Texas adds support for policymakers to reevaluate whether these changes should remain temporary," the authors write.

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

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