

Few waived clinicians prescribed buprenorphine: New study

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A new study found a declining proportion of DATA-waivered clinicians prescribed any buprenorphine between 2017 and 2021. While the number of waived clinicians increased significantly during the five-

year window, only one out of three prescribed any buprenorphine as of May 2021. Furthermore, the majority of prescriptions were written by clinicians who specialize in treating opioid use disorder.

The research letter published in *JAMA* April 27 [notes](#) that the Drug Addiction Treatment Act (DATA) of 2000 created a pathway for clinicians to obtain a "waiver" to prescribe buprenorphine (also known by the brand name Suboxone) outside of an opioid treatment program. While originally intended as a strategy to increase access to treatment, researchers at the George Washington University noted that recent policies are now focused on reducing or removing waiver requirements to prescribe buprenorphine to facilitate provider participation.

"With the removal of the waiver entirely in the 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act, this study brings into question the assumption that eliminating the waiver will lead to substantial increases in [buprenorphine](#) access," the authors said. "While removal of this barrier may make it easier for clinicians to begin prescribing, additional investments may be needed to build and support clinicians treating [opioid use disorder](#)."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention the number of overdose deaths in the US increased by nearly 30% from 2019 to 2020. Most of the drug overdose deaths in 2020 involved an opioid. Buprenorphine is used to treat opioid use disorder and increasing access to this medication is essential in the US strategy to fight the opioid crisis, according to the authors.

More information: Qian Luo et al, Changes in Waivered Clinicians Prescribing Buprenorphine and Prescription Volume by Patient Limit, *JAMA* (2023). [DOI: 10.1001/jama.2023.5038](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2023.5038)

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