

It's tougher for non-white americans to get opioid addiction drug

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Americans addicted to opioids who need the anti-addiction med buprenorphine are far more likely to find it if they live in a predominantly white neighborhood, new research finds.

"Access is substantially better in areas that are very white," said study lead author Coleman Drake, an assistant professor of health policy and management at Pitt Public Health in Pittsburgh.

"When you move to areas with even some racial or [ethnic diversity](#), there is a large decline in the geographic availability of [buprenorphine](#) prescribers and prescription fills," he noted in a University of Pittsburgh news release. "In areas that are less than 95% white, for example, there's a 45 to 50% drop [in access]."

The findings were published Feb. 20 in the *Journal of Addiction Medicine*.

Prior studies have looked at access to buprenorphine, but Drake's group is among the first to look at the issue at the local level.

They tracked the number of [health](#) care providers in a given ZIP code who might prescribe or dispense buprenorphine to those who needed it.

Compared to largely white urban areas, the most ethnically/racially diverse urban zip codes were between 45% to 55% less likely to have prescribers able to provide buprenorphine, Drake's group found. That gap rose to between 62% to 79% for rural parts of the United States, the study found.

Spurred by the ongoing crisis of opioid abuse and overdose deaths, efforts have been made over the past decade to ease access to buprenorphine, the team said. But any rise in access hasn't been equal for everyone.

According to Drake, more must be done to raise the number of buprenorphine prescribers in diverse communities and to promote better prescribing among those already prescribing the treatment.

More information: Find out more about buprenorphine at the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#).

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