Ethnic and racial disparities found in buprenorphine treatment

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In this new effort, the researchers noted evidence that not everyone has equal access to the drug and that such access may be impacted by race or ethnicity. To learn more, they asked for and obtained access to a database, owned and run by the health technology company IQVIA, containing information on thousands of patients and millions of prescriptions filled by doctors covering the years 2006 to 2020.

The researchers found evidence of disparities in the ways that buprenorphine was prescribed and also in the duration of treatment. Most in the medical community suggest that the minimum amount of time an addict should take the drug is six months.

In their study, they found that while approximately 84.1% of white patients in the database had access to buprenorphine, the same was true for just 8.1% of black patients and 6.3% of Hispanic patients. They also found that the average treatment duration time for white patients was 53 days; that fell to 44 days for black patients and just 40 days for Hispanic patients. They also noted that the numbers have grown worse in more recent years.

The researchers were not able to isolate a reason for the disparities they found in treatment options, but suggested more work is required.


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