A retrospective review of patterns of use of long-acting injectable buprenorphine products.

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Introduction: In early 2019, Australia became the first jurisdiction to have two brands of long-acting injectable buprenorphine (LAI-B) products available. Previously published studies have mostly followed pre-planned dosing schedules and seldom compared use of both products. This study presents a retrospective analysis of the ‘real-world’ dosing requirements of patients on LAI-B.

Method: Data was provided by 3 clinics for patients commenced on LAI-B between 1 February 2019 and 30 June 2021 for buprenorphine doses and intervals between dosing. Basic demographic data including age, gender and previous dose of transmucosal buprenorphine were recorded. Local Institutional Ethics Committee approval was gained.

Results: Over 3600 individual doses (59% Buvidal & 41% Sublocade) were administered to 340 individual patients (median age 40 years, 63% male), with the longest duration in treatment of 856 days. Approximately 95% transferred from transmucosal buprenorphine (median daily dose 16mg, range 2-32mg). Most common LAI-B doses were Sublocade 100mg (22.4%) and Buvidal Monthly 128mg (21.5%); Buvidal Weekly 24mg (0.8%) was least used. 13% transitioned between LAI-B products (9% Buvidal to Sublocade, 2% Sublocade to Buvidal and 1.7% both ways). Mean gap between doses was 7 days for weekly doses and for monthly doses ranged from Buvidal 128mg (25 days) to Sublocade 300mg (29 days). Overall, 33% discontinued LAI-B before the census date.

Discussions and Conclusions: Most patients who started LAI-B remained in treatment, with similar rates in both products. A small, but appreciable number of people switched brands, suggesting that it remains important to have treatment options available.

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