

A GUIDE TO USING SLOW-RELEASE ORAL MORPHINE IN OPIOID AGONIST THERAPY

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Background:

In Canada, opioid agonist therapy (OAT) is the first-line treatment for opioid use disorder and has been proven an effective strategy to lower incidence of hepatitis C and other drug-related harms in people who inject drugs. Although buprenorphine/naloxone and methadone are the standard treatment, there has been an increased interest in the use of slow-release oral morphine (SROM) and a growing literature on the matter. Despite indicated off-label as an OAT in Canada, SROM offers an alternative option for those still without treatment. SROM is administered orally, once daily, and can be prescribed in addition to safer supply. This [Guide to using SROM](#) is aiming to summarize available literature and clinical expertise to support clinicians in their practice.

Description of model of care/intervention:

The Guide presents SROM characteristics from general principles to eligibility, contraindications and precautions, and highlights our provincial recommendations in which SROM is placed as a first-line treatment along with standard options. The Guide and recommendations were developed using the Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation (GRADE) approach with an Expert Review Committee composed of peer-based organizations and clinical practitioners.

Effectiveness:

SROM is proven to have advantages compared to methadone, such as less impact on QTc, less drug interactions, less symptoms of depression and anxiety, while having similar retention rates, non-opioid substance use, and adverse events. It's also shown to improve well-being and treatment satisfaction and could reduce heroin cravings and heroin use more effectively.

Conclusion and next steps:

The Guide to using SROM is one more step towards meeting people's needs, offering more flexibility that could result in less drug-related harms, and providing guidance to clinicians. However, the use of SROM still needs to be generalized and studied, in a context where very few OAT options coexist and are not widely available across the country.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: See example below:

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