

Experiences and outcomes of depot buprenorphine treatment in clients with concurrent opioid dependence and chronic pain.

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Introduction and issues. Over a third of clients in opioid agonist treatment experience chronic pain (defined as pain that impairs function for >3 months), and in Australia we are seeing more people with chronic pain and pharmaceutical opioid dependence being directed towards opioid agonist treatment – particularly high dose sublingual buprenorphine formulations.

It is unclear what the role of the new depot buprenorphine products will be in managing clients with concurrent chronic pain and opioid dependence. There may be some pharmacological (constant release over extended time frame) and behavioural / psychological advantages (no longer having a temporal association between taking a pill and relief of distress/ symptoms) in using depot buprenorphine compared to sublingual formulations, although there is little documented.

Methods: A case series examining pain outcomes and experiences in clients with concurrent chronic pain and pharmaceutical opioid dependence treated with depot buprenorphine products. Clients were transferred as part of routine care from SL to depot buprenorphine products. Outcome measures were collected in the month before transfer, and for up to 3 months following transfer, and included measures of pain severity and pain interference (Brief Pain Inventory), adverse events, client satisfaction, client reported health ratings, and recent substance use (ATOP).

Key findings: Most, but not all clients reported improved clinical outcomes (pain measures) following transfer to depot buprenorphine.

Conclusion and discussion: Our early experiences suggest depot buprenorphine may offer clinical advantages, as well as greater convenience for clients with both chronic pain and opioid dependence.

Implications for translation research: Further research is required, including randomised controlled trials examining patient reported outcomes such as pain measures, general health, consumer satisfaction, use of concomitant medications and substance use.

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