

Social listening for patient experiences with stopping extended-release buprenorphine

Category: Poster Presentation (in person)

Abstract Body

Research Aim: It is expected that buprenorphine plasma concentrations reduce slowly over time when patients stop treatment with extended-release buprenorphine (SUBLOCADE®), which is approved for the treatment of opioid use disorder (OUD). This study sought to understand individual experiences with stopping extended-release buprenorphine as described on social media.

Methods: Historical Reddit posts (March 2018–August 2022) were evaluated using: 1) keyword search ('Sublocade' and similar search strings) and 2) a subreddit-specific search of r/Sublocade. Records were further evaluated for mentions of cessation (keywords: taper, discontinue, etc.). Usernames were obfuscated. A 50% randomized sample of records was selected for qualitative analysis; coding and thematic analysis was completed by an experienced subject-matter expert.

Results: Out of a total of 3,041 posts that were manually coded and analyzed, 1,179 (38.8%) contained reference to cessation. Many individuals shared information about their prior use of medications for OUD (MOUD), primarily oral buprenorphine (185 records/63 authors), including the use of extended-release buprenorphine as means of tapering off buprenorphine treatment. Individuals provided detailed information about their course of extended-release buprenorphine treatment prior to cessation (635 records/172 authors) and details about their experiences following cessation. There were 102 records (8.7%) mentioning withdrawal and 1 record mentioning craving. Discussions of treatment planning/cessation frequently referenced concepts of pharmacokinetics/pharmacodynamics, receptor saturation, personalized approaches to treatment, the importance of patient agency, and concerns about what was perceived to be rigid treatment policies/plans.

Conclusions: There was robust and nuanced discussion of treatment cessation among individuals treated with extended-release buprenorphine who posted on Reddit. Although these results are not necessarily generalizable to the broader population of those treated with buprenorphine, they provide useful insights into real-world patient experiences. More research is needed to understand the course of OUD following cessation of extended-release buprenorphine as well as other MOUD.

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Key Words

- Mutual Help/Peer Support/Lived Experience
- Opioids/Opiates

Learning Objective # 1

Present an example of methodology that uses social media to provide insights into patient experiences during treatment for substance use disorder.

Learning Objective # 2

Present quantitative and qualitative findings from an analysis of social media posts to provide attendees with an understanding of patients' experiences after cessation of extended-release buprenorphine in the context of its pharmacokinetic properties.

Reference # 1

Anderson LS, Bell HG, Gilbert M, Davidson JE, Winter C, Barratt MJ, Win B, Painter JL, Menone C, Sayegh J, Dasgupta N. (2017). Using Social Listening Data to Monitor Misuse and Nonmedical Use of Bupropion: A Content Analysis. *JMIR public health and surveillance*, 3(1), e6. <https://doi.org/10.2196/publichealth.6174>

Reference # 2

Jones AK, Ngaimisi E, Gopalakrishnan M, Young MA, & Laffont, CM. (2021). Population Pharmacokinetics of a Monthly Buprenorphine Depot Injection for the Treatment of Opioid Use Disorder: A Combined Analysis of Phase II and Phase III Trials. *Clinical pharmacokinetics*, 60(4), 527–540. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40262-020-00957-0>

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