

Counselor attitudes toward buprenorphine: The importance of training and access to information.

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Given evidence of the efficacy of buprenorphine in treating opiate dependence, it is critical to uncover the mechanisms that will or will not move this empirically-supported treatment into clinical practice. In substance abuse treatment, counseling staff can support, resist, or maintain a neutral attitude toward the introduction of buprenorphine in their organizations. This research examines counselor perceptions of efficacy of buprenorphine and attitudes towards its use. We hypothesize that professionalization, continuing education, and Internet use will be associated with more positive perceptions about the efficacy and acceptability of using buprenorphine, while personal recovery status and a 12 step orientation towards treatment will be negatively associated with these attitudes. Using questionnaire data from counselors at 400 publicly funded and 400 privately funded substance abuse treatment centers, preliminary results indicate that nearly 70% of addiction counselors report they do not know if buprenorphine is an effective treatment technique. Of the remaining counselors, the average perceived efficacy of buprenorphine was about 3.7 (on a scale with "7" indicating "very effective"). For this subsample of counselors, continuing education was positively associated with perceived efficacy of buprenorphine. In addition, greater Internet use was associated with higher perceived efficacy of buprenorphine as a treatment technique. All counselors were also asked about the extent to which buprenorphine was acceptable as a treatment technique. The average of 3.4 on a 7-point scale indicates moderate support for buprenorphine use. Multivariate results demonstrate that training is positively associated with acceptability of buprenorphine, while having a 12 step orientation is negatively associated with buprenorphine acceptability. Having at least a Master's degree was positively associated with perceived acceptability of buprenorphine, while being certified or licensed were not significant predictors. Internet use was not a significant predictor of acceptability. This research suggests that diffusion of information and further training of counseling staff may play important roles in institutionalizing buprenorphine in treatment facilities.