



Practice Guideline: Opioid Prescribing for Opioid Use Disorder (2022)

Practice Guidelines are recommendations developed by the College with which members should be familiar and follow whenever and wherever possible and appropriate.

Opioid Prescribing for Opioid Use Disorder

Preamble

The College expects physicians to prescribe opioid medications in a manner which is safe and effective. The College has repealed its' Methadone Maintenance Treatment Standards and Guidelines (2018) and Suboxone® for Opioid Dependence Practice Guideline (2017) and replaced both with this unified Opioid Prescribing for Opioid Use Disorder Practice Guideline.

Opioid dependence treatment is an integral response to Canada's ongoing opioid crisis. Newfoundland and Labrador continues to record opioid-overdose related deaths and hospitalizations, with outcomes exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Physicians are fundamental to supporting access to life-saving treatment for patients with opioid use disorder throughout the province.

Practice Guideline

The College expects that all physicians who prescribe opioid agonist treatment for opioid use disorder will have the requisite knowledge about its intended impacts, side effects, and role in addictions treatment.

Physicians should prescribe medication for opioid dependence in accordance with recommendations included in evidence-based guidelines and best practice documents. At the time of the adoption of this Practice Guideline, these include:

- [Opioid Agonist Therapy: A Synthesis of Canadian Guidelines for Treating Opioid Use Disorder](#) (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2021)*
- [A Guideline for the Clinical Management of Opioid Use Disorder](#) (British Columbia Centre on Substance Use, 2017)*

Furthermore, the following are strongly recommended*:

1. Complete a formal, accredited course, such as:
 - a. [Buprenorphine-Naloxone Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder](#) (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health)
 - b. [Suboxone® Training Program](#) (Suboxone® CME)
 - c. Buprenorphine/Naloxone Treatment of Addiction Program (Current course offerings are promoted through the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association and the Family Practice Renewal Program.)
 - d. [Opioid Use Disorder Treatment \(OUDT\) Course](#) (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health)
 - e. [Provincial Opioid Addiction Treatment Support Program](#) (British Columbia Centre on Substance Use)
2. Undertake ongoing continuing medical education in opioid dependence treatment and/or addictions medicine, such as:
 - a. [Project ECHO NL: Opioid Use Disorder](#) (Eastern Health)
 - b. [Concurrent Disorders \(CD\) Learning Series](#) (Alberta Health Services)
 - c. [Alberta ODT Virtual Training Program](#) (Alberta Health Services)
 - d. [Combatting Stigma – for Physicians and Other Health Professionals](#) (MDcme.ca)
 - e. [Introduction to Safe Prescribing: Opioids, Benzodiazepines, and Stimulants](#) (MDcme.ca)
3. Refer to current, evidence-based practice resources, such as:
 - a. **Clinical Tools:**
 - i. [Managing Opioid Use Disorder in Primary Care: PEER Simplified Guideline](#) (The College of Family Physicians of Canada)
 - ii. [DSM-5 Clinical Diagnostic Criteria for Opioid Use Disorder](#)
 - iii. [Clinical Opiate Withdrawal Scale](#)
 - iv. [Subjective Opiate Withdrawal Scale](#)

* Physicians should consult the organization websites for the most recent version of documents and updated courses.

- v. [Safe prescribing practices for addictive medications and management of substance use disorders in primary care: A pocket reference for family physicians](#) (META:PHI)
 - vi. [Essential Clinical Skills for Opioid Prescribers](#) (Institute for Safe Medication Practices Canada and Women’s College Hospital)
 - vii. [Buprenorphine Reference Guide for the Treatment of Opioid Use Disorder](#) (University of Toronto and McMaster University Health Sciences)
- b. **Special Populations:**
- i. [Canadian Guidelines on Opioid Use Disorder Among Older Adults](#) (Canadian Coalition for Seniors’ Mental Health)
 - ii. [Emergency Department Toolkit for Opioid Use Disorder](#) (META:PHI)
- c. **Emerging Practices:**
- i. [Sublocade \(Extended-Release Buprenorphine\) Information](#) (Provincial Opioid Dependence Treatment Centre of Excellence)
 - ii. [A Guide to the Use of Depot Buprenorphine](#) (META:PHI)
 - iii. [Buprenorphine/Naloxone Microdosing: The Bernese Method. A Brief Summary for Primary Care Clinicians](#) (Canadian Mental Health Association & Thames Valley Family Health Team)
4. Review College Practice Guidelines and Standards of Practice on the topic of prescribing.
 5. Consult more experienced prescribers of medications for opioid dependence when necessary to enhance knowledge and ensure patient safety during induction or re-induction after missed doses.
 - a. Submit non-urgent, patient-specific questions to an Addictions Medicine specialist via the [eConsult Service](#) available in HEALTHe NL.
 - b. Contact the [Opioid Dependence Treatment Hub](#) in your region for support from an experienced prescriber and information about local addictions services and counselling.
 6. Review the patient’s current medication profile through the Pharmacy Network HEALTHe NL viewer.
 7. Document discussion with the patient on the availability and benefits of addictions services and counselling.

Acknowledgements

CPSA (2019) Opioid Agonist Treatment Program

CPSO (2019) Prescribing Drugs

CPSPEI (2018) Prescribing Buprenorphine (Opioid Dependency)

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