

**TITLE:** “If you’re on suboxone, you’re not in recovery”: Medication Assisted Treatment Successes and Stigma

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**STUDENT SUBMISSION:** No

**TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE:** All public health professionals

**ABSTRACT:** Background:

In 2016 two Opioid Treatment Programs and one primary care program began implementing a grant to increase access to Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) to address high rates of opioid misuse and addiction in three rural Oregon regions.

Purpose:

Many studies support MAT’s effectiveness to decrease opioid use and improve quality of life. Nonetheless, stigma related to MAT persists. We will share promising MAT outcomes, clients’ experiences of stigma, and steps to improve MAT acceptance to bridge the gap between treatment need and treatment utilization.

Methods:

This mixed methods study includes quantitative client data collected at intake and at 6-month follow-up, along with data from key staff surveys and interviews and MAT client focus groups collected 10 months into implementation.

Results:

Clients described experiencing stigma related to MAT from healthcare providers, police, and the treatment community. Despite treatment stigma, MAT clients reported notable progress on program outcomes, including decreased opioid use and improved health and quality of life.

Conclusions:

MAT improves clients’ health and quality of life and benefits community health. However, MAT clients continue to experience stigma related to taking medication to treat addiction. Efforts to improve MAT acceptance can increase treatment utilization and enhance individual and community well-being.

**OBJECTIVE(S):** List successful outcomes of Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT).

Describe stigma experienced by MAT clients.

Discuss ways to increase MAT acceptance and increase treatment utilization.

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