

Outline for Initial Pharmacist–Client Dialogue: Buprenorphine

- Ask the client about allergies.
- Take a medication and drug use history.
- Review the client's current medication profile and encourage the client to disclose to the pharmacist all future prescription, over-the-counter and herbal medications for monitoring of interactions.
- Ask the client about his or her knowledge of buprenorphine—this helps to reinforce correct knowledge and to correct misunderstandings.
- Encourage abstinence from other opioids both for client safety reasons and to hasten the process of achieving the optimal buprenorphine dose.
- Outline procedures in the pharmacy for observed doses of sublingual buprenorphine emphasizing that this will be done discreetly and respectfully. Instruct the client not to chew, suck or swallow tablet(s).
- Explain that buprenorphine is generally well tolerated and review the most common adverse effects: constipation, drowsiness and dizziness. Warn that it may precipitate withdrawal depending on the client's last dose of an opioid agonist.
- Encourage the client to discuss with the prescriber and with the pharmacist any adverse effects he or she experiences.
- Warn of possible additive adverse effects when buprenorphine is combined with other CNS depressants such as alcohol, benzodiazepines, other opioids and sedating OTC medications.
- Orient the client to the pharmacy's procedures such as dispensing hours, required identification, observation of doses, etc.
- Remind the client of the need to inform a dentist or another physician that he or she is receiving methadone if another opioid is prescribed. Explain to the patient that this is done for therapeutic efficacy and for safety. Also, not informing a dentist or physician when receiving a second opioid is a legal offence ("double doctoring").
- Advise the client to refrain from eating foods with poppy seeds because they may cause opioid-positive urine samples.
- Inform the client that in order to maintain confidentiality, pharmacy staff will not relay messages between patients and their friends or relatives.
- Discuss mutual expectations with respect to appropriate behaviour in the pharmacy and payment for medications.
- Ask the client to present picture ID before dispensing the medication.
- Ask the client to agree, verbally or in writing, to the important commitments associated with the treatment. (A sample client treatment agreement can be downloaded from the OpiATE toolkit found at www.methadonesaveslives.ca.) Be sensitive to the client's literacy level.

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