

Subutex vs Suboxone

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No Conflicts of Interest to Report

Subutex vs Suboxone

For this talk, this is *code* for mono-product vs bi-product. I provide no endorsement of any specific brand

Brief History of Buprenorphine

- Developed in the 1970s as a safer alternative to morphine for treatment of pain
- DATA 2000 Act allowed providers to prescribe it for addiction care as an alternative to methadone, but required an individual waiver to prescribe
- Treatment of choice for opioid-dependent women during pregnancy (ACOG, 2017). Higher birthweight, larger head circumferences, less preterm birth, and less neonatal withdrawal when compared to methadone

How Does Buprenorphine Work

- Long-acting, high-affinity partial agonist at the mu-opioid receptor
- Prevents withdrawal and craving and “stabilizes opioid receptors”
- Blocks other opioids from binding
- As a partial agonist, it has a smaller effect, a ceiling, a low overdose risk, and no intoxication in the opioid dependent
- 16 mg will cover approximately 80% of opioid receptors

Naloxone

- Opioid antagonist
- Poor oral or sublingual absorption
- High first-pass hepatic metabolism
- No human studies on teratogenicity, but animal studies are negative
- No effect on sublingual use of buprenorphine, but blocks intravenous or intranasal abuse of buprenorphine
- Added to buprenorphine to decrease the risk of abuse and diversion

Subutex

- Was the only product on the market when it was first used in pregnancy
- Urged prescription due to the concern about the unknown risk of naloxone crossing the placenta. Rapid clearing by the liver makes this transfer very minimal (Weigand et al 2016)
- Recommendation persists that patients be transferred to Subutex during pregnancy
- Poor availability of product, increased costs, patient resistance
- Buprenorphine-products are the #1 diverted opioid. In many countries, the monoproduct is strictly regulated and often unavailable

Suboxone

- The rationale for the use of the bi-product holds in pregnancy
- Most of the original studies were done with Subutex.
- Link, et al systematic review and meta-analysis (2020). Similar pregnancy outcomes*
- (Gawronski 2014, Jumah 2016, Nechanska 2018, Wiegand 2015, Mullins 2020)
- Alas, the gold-standard, randomized controlled trial remains elusive

* Link HM, Jones H, Miller L, Kaltenbach K, Seligman N. **Buprenorphine-naloxone use in pregnancy: a systematic review and metaanalysis.** Am J Obstet Gynecol 2020;2:100179