

The High Point Pook

HPC strives to guide, educate, encourage, and support

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Volume 37

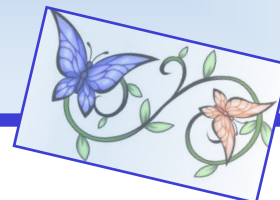
Finally, the X-Waiver is Gone!

Well, it finally happened. They finally did away with the dreaded x-waiver. For those of you who have no idea what I am talking about, the x-waiver was one of the major obstacles to treatment of substance use disorder in the United States.

The x-waiver was the special DEA number that doctors like myself had to get in order to prescribe buprenorphine (Suboxone). In order for me to prescribe buprenorphine I had to take an eight-hour online course and pay \$200. While that may not sound like a lot, the problem is that doctors traditionally don't want to take care of drug addicts anyway, so why would a doctor spend an entire Saturday and \$200 to treat people they didn't want to treat anyway?

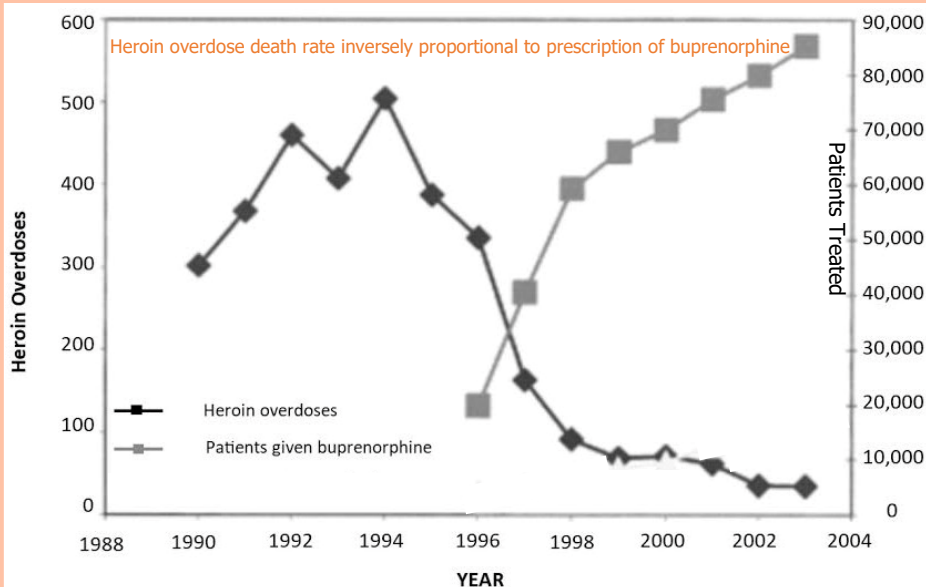
One of the main reasons that Europe has been so much more successful than the United States in reducing overdose deaths; is that in Europe, from day one, they have allowed any doctor to prescribe Suboxone to anyone at any time for any reason without any restrictions. I'm sure most of you are familiar with the France graphs that I show everyone. (If not, I have included it below.) The US mortality graphs (also included below) and the huge difference between the two. Clearly unrestricted access to treatment through primary care doctors is hugely successful. But it took the US thirty years to do it. Fortunately it has finally happened—doctors no longer need to get a special DEA number, or take a special course or pay money to get that special license to prescribe Suboxone. So now that the primary obstacle to treatment has been removed, there is still the secondary barrier to treatment—the attitudes of physicians.

We have encouraged many of you to ask your primary care providers if they are ready to begin prescribing your medication. Technically they all could do that right now. As many of you report, your family doctor just "isn't comfortable" prescribing buprenorphine. Our task is to keep asking, keep pushing, keep trying to convince family doctors that this is something they need to be doing. It takes time and effort to change long-standing attitudes. Progress is being made but there is still much to do. This needs to be a primary care disease. It's not rocket science. All of us need to work together to change the status quo. I have told many of you that I am available to talk directly with any doctor who has questions about how to provide buprenorphine or any provider who is willing to start treating their own patients. Please let me know if any of your physicians or nurse practitioners would be willing to have that discussion. This is a team effort. Let me know what I can do to help. - **Dr. Vance Shaw, MD, FASAM**



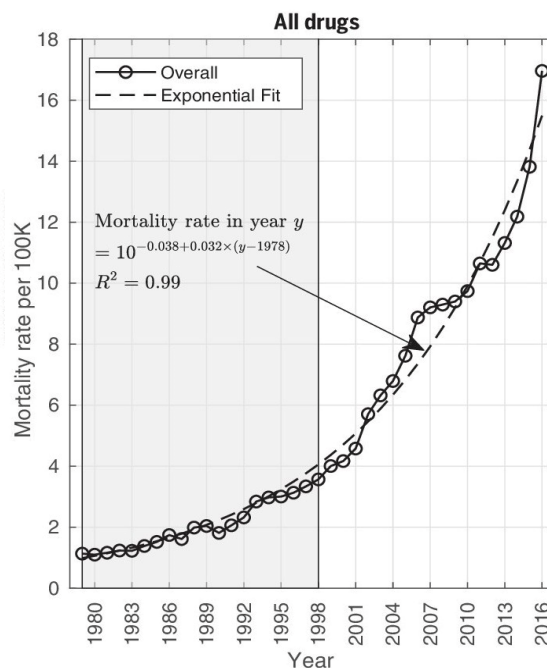
In a study presented at the International Society of Addiction Medicine, it was clearly shown that entry into Opioid Maintenance Treatment (OMT) reduces overdose-mortality by 80%!!!

Graphs below demonstrate significant decrease in mortality based on the patients being supplied with buprenorphine. On the left, the France graph depicts clear decrease in mortality with use of buprenorphine. The graph on the right is a United States graph which shows that, without the use of buprenorphine, mortality only increases at an exponential rate.



From: Buprenorphine Use: The International Experience
 Clin Infect Dis. 2006; 43 (Supplement_4):S197-S215. doi:10.1086/508184
 Clin Infect Dis © 2006 by the Infectious Diseases Society of America

FRANCE



Spring: A Time for Change!

After hibernating ourselves away, springtime often becomes a time we can seek change and even feel excited about something new happening. That often presents itself in the form of being outdoors more and being more social. One of my favorite things to do is go to the Farmers Markets that start opening back up in the spring. Getting to taste all the yummy fresh food and meet the people who are putting in all the hard work necessary to feed us is so fulfilling. They inspire me to be more connected to the earth. It also helps me connect to on a personal level with the growth and renewal that takes place in nature at this season. Here are some events going on this Spring that I hope will inspire you to feel excitement over new possibilities and a change in the rhythms of life.

- * **Johnson City Farmers Market:** Opening day, April 1, 2023, from 8:00am-1:00pm. Every Saturday through October.
- * ASK about Food stamp eligibility! If a stand has SNAP (food stamps) eligible items, they are required to participate and accept *SNAP benefits.
- * **Jonesborough Farmers Market:** Saturdays May 6 to October 21, (except July 1 and October 7), from 8 am to 12 pm. SNAP (food stamps): This currency is eligible for purchase of food items except hot, ready-to-eat foods and food-producing plants and seeds. You can get more details at the information desk when you get there.
- * **Tweetsie Trail:** 9.6 mile stretch for hiking, biking, and walking through Johnson City into Elizabethton.
- * **Tipton-Haynes State Historic Site:** N. Roan St., Johnson City, TN, building began in 1784 and you can learn more about Tennessee's history.
- * **Wooly Days and Garden Activities:** April 22, 10:00am-April 23 at 5:00 pm, Piney Flats, TN. Learn more about wool, where it comes from and how it is processed as well as all things concerning gardening.
- * **Fridays after Five:** Johnson City, TN, in Founders Park. Free live music series starting in May. Dates and line up to be announced!

-Cari Gregg, Case Manager

Spring Renewal: A Mind and Body Process

We make our best decisions at balance, but how do we get there when the world is on fire and winter is still nipping at our nose? This reflection is meant to help us in the process of finding renewal, of regaining balance regardless of what's happening in our lives.

My first suggestion is to shift your focus to nature. It may sound cliché to suggest looking outside to nature for the renewal and balance we seek, but often clichés hold deep wisdom. So let's experiment! Turn your face towards your corner of Northeast TN or Southwest VA, take a deep breath, close your eyes and as you breathe out open your eyes with a childlike wonder as if you're seeing for the first time. What do you see that reflects balance and renewal? In the past month we've seen the gray-brown landscape splashed with purple crocuses, yellow and orange daffodils, pink hyacinths, red and pink cherry trees, white pear trees, pinkish-purple red bud trees, a variety of colored tulips and creeping phlox, and most recently the white and pink dogwoods. You may not know these flowers and trees, so do an internet search to familiarize yourself with them. Now dial up your attention and notice the shades of color, count them, appreciate and honor the life of each one, and then allow yourself to marvel at the incredible beauty and complexity of the transition of seasons from winter to spring taking place all around you. Wow!! This happens each year, under our noses and for that matter, above them too! What we focus on increases in our lives. If we experiment with shifting our focus to the renewal around us, perhaps our mood and perspective will also shift to bring increased balance, contentment, and maintained recovery. If you find yourself stuck and not able to shift, try literally turning your face toward the sun, move to a different room, or open your palms to the sky to receive that which you desire.

My second suggestion is to shift your beliefs. At High Point Clinic (HPC), we hear folks struggling with shameful self-beliefs that they are not enough, too much, or disgusting. There is nothing wrong with you and it is often what happened to us that creates our struggles. Our brains desire balance and healing and just as our bodies heal from injury, at times slowly, our brains also have the capacity to heal! Recall a time you learned something new about yourself or about the world. How did you feel about yourself? Perhaps, "I'm capable. I can learn from my mistakes. I can get my needs met. I'm ok as I am." These adaptive self-beliefs and ability to grow are skills you have! Even if you can't see it, you are growing and processing towards growth even now. Likely you've had the experience where you've not seen a child for a time and then the next time you see them, they've doubled in size! You are the same way, little by little growing and processing towards greater balance.

Your brain wants to function well, heal, and is on your side. At times, our trauma and mental health issues prevent our brains from responding to our present moment from balance. You can build your ability to respond from balance and reduce your reactive emotionality. This happens through redirecting our attention to the renewal around us in nature, intentionally connecting with other living beings, savoring that connection, healing disconnections and harms done to us and those we've inflicted on ourselves. You are a beautiful, amazing being who has come so far. HPC is honored to walk alongside you in your journey. Renewal is all around you. Open your mind and hands to receive it.

-Emily Hand, LPC, MHSP, Clinical Director



M.O.R.E. Mindfulness-Oriented Recovery Enhancement

MORE is an evidenced-based approach that uses the practice of mindful meditation and cognitive reappraisal to reduce stress, pain, and urges. Mindfulness meditation is a skill to help "train your brain" to focus on and savor the feeling of being present in the moment, letting thoughts, images,

and distractions pass and redirect focus on the present moment in meditation. Over time we learn to use this skill during times we experience stress, pain, or urges, to allow the experience to exist and then letting it go without allowing the stress, pain, or urges to take charge of or direct our behaviors. You can get more information about this coping technique at any time—just ask your counselor about it.

- Beth Farris, Counseling Intern