Meeting the Challenges of COVID-19 in Postmarketing Surveillance

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Agenda

- Anticipated and observed trends in substance use during COVID-19
- Challenges of current research methodologies
- RADARS System approach to COVID-19 with current programs
- Highlights of research questions and novel approaches
Anticipated Trends in SUD

• Anticipate increase in SUD in setting of social isolation, difficulty accessing support networks, etc.
• Possible drug-switching within and between classes
• Increase in access to telehealth may improve OUD treatment access, but decrease in in-person visits, staff
  – May see decline in treatment and increase in relapse
  – May see “bolus” as restrictions ease
Challenges of Current Methodologies

• Paper vs digital formats
• In person vs remote data collection
• Need for nimble approaches
• Need mixture of prospective data collection changes and retrospective analyses to anticipate major changes, provide policy/regulatory guidance
RADARS® System Mosaic Surveillance

- Poison Center
- Treatment Center
- Entering Treatment
- Internet Chatter
- Drug Transactions
- Non-Medical Use
- Survey of Non-Medical Use of Prescription Drugs
- Drug Diversion
- Illicit Market Price
- Acute Health Events
- StreetRx

RADARS SYSTEM
Impact of COVID-19 on Poison Center Data
Poison Center Prescription Opioids, 2019-2020

Weeks since beginning of the year

Exposures involving a prescription opioid

2019
2020
2020 - Predicted with change points
Poison Center Prescription Opioids, 2019-2020
Poison Center Data During COVID-19

• Changes in API reporting
• May be seeing increase in counterfeit pills
• Changes in locations of care and severity
• The constant question:
  – Which findings will persist and which are transient?
Impact of COVID-19 on Treatment Center Data
Treatment Center Site Surveys

• Survey to treatment center leadership to evaluate barriers to providing care, as well as innovations
• Questions on changes in practice, including MOUD and transitions to telemedicine
• Mixed methods, with predominantly qualitative data
## Site Survey Response Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Launch 1</th>
<th>Launch 2</th>
<th>Launch 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TC: 64.0% (103/161)</td>
<td>TC: 62.7% (101/161)</td>
<td>TC: 60.0% (99/165)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTP: 85.7% (54/63)</td>
<td>OTP: 81.0% (51/63)</td>
<td>OTP: 82.1% (55/67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SKIP: 50.0% (49/98)</td>
<td>SKIP: 51.0% (50/98)</td>
<td>SKIP: 44.9% (44/98)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Barriers to Providing Treatment

• Centers reported fewer barriers over time
  – Launch 1: 52.4%
  – Launch 2: 38.6%
  – Launch 3: 33.3%

• Launch 1 85.2% of those who indicated a barrier said it was due to COVID-19

• Staff shortages also reported by the majority of treatment centers
Changes in Treatment Center Operations

- Treatment Centers reported suspending new patients and temporary closures during the first launch and over time reported fewer suspensions and closures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operation Change</th>
<th>March 1, 2020 through May 31, 2020</th>
<th>June 1, 2020 through September 31, 2020</th>
<th>October 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suspended patients from entering treatment</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporarily Closed and Reopened</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No closure/suspensions</td>
<td>76.4%</td>
<td>93.8%</td>
<td>83.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Intake Changes

- Majority of centers continued to do onsite intakes throughout the pandemic
- Roughly half of centers utilized telemedicine during intakes throughout the pandemic
Methadone Changes

- Majority of Treatment Centers have reduced the amount of time a patient is on methadone before providing them with first take-home dose
- Majority of Treatment Centers have utilized telemedicine to follow up with patients who receive take-home doses of methadone
Buprenorphine Changes

• Majority of Treatment Centers did not start people on buprenorphine who would have otherwise received methadone

• Majority Treatment Centers have utilized telemedicine to follow up with patients who receive buprenorphine but did not use telemedicine to initiate buprenorphine treatment
Patient Changes

• Treatment Centers did not see a change in the number of patients stopping treatment during the pandemic
• Treatment Centers reported patient relapses either increasing or remaining the same during the pandemic
• Treatment Centers had an evenly split response regarding number of new patients seeking treatment. About a third each said increasing, decreasing, and remaining the same
Open Ended Text Response Examples

• “The spread of COVID-19 has definitely increased the opioid use and we are finding it hard to get the people treated due to lack of testing sites.”
• “our doctors are using telemedicine more so than seeing our clients in person”
• “A decrease in the number of patients seeking MAT services”
• “Moved to very generous takehomes, with most patients having two week or monthly takehomes.”
• “Telehealth counseling; car dosing”
• “Staffing shortages have led to decreases in counseling services in recent months.”
• “Due to court and other legal offices not meeting regularly the demand for treatment has decreased.”
• “I do not believe it has affected people seeking services overall.”
• “Because the courts were closed or slow we at times had trouble getting clients for admission out of jail. This made following our wait list order a problem.”
• “Clients making up bogus COVID excuses as to why they aren't here for therapy”
• “therapy services is offered virtually”
• “Some clients who are positive for covid or experience similar symptoms have been dosed in their cars. Otherwise, no changes.”
• “Telemedicine for counseling Services”
Highlights of Research Questions and Novel Approaches

- Changes in current substance use patterns vs data collection
- Crucial importance of digital formats
- Transitions to/away from illicit substances and Rx substances
- Substance use treatment changes
- High risk populations (e.g. Healthcare workers)
- NMU trends for other drugs (e.g. NMURx COVID medications, OTC medication projects)
Thank You

Questions?

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