



Analysis of Buprenorphine Prescribing Patterns Among Advanced Practitioners in Medicaid

**—
Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission**

John Wedeles

Overview

- Background
- Study approach
- Key findings
- Policy implications
- Next steps

Background

- Medicaid beneficiaries are disproportionately affected by the opioid epidemic, with higher rates of opioid use disorder (OUD) and increased risk of overdose
- Congress has taken steps to address limited capacity among providers in treating OUD

Background (cont.)

- Under the Drug Addiction Treatment Act of 2000 (DATA 2000, P.L. 106-310), only qualified physicians could obtain waivers to prescribe buprenorphine
- The Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016 (CARA, P.L. 114-198) expanded prescribing authority for buprenorphine to nurse practitioners (NPs) and physician assistants (PAs)
 - 1st DATA 2000 waivers approved February 2017

Approach

- MACPAC contracted with IMPAQ International to examine effect of CARA on access to OUD treatment for Medicaid beneficiaries
 - Analyzed retail pharmacy claims from July 2017 to June 2018
 - Examined prescribing trends, geographic location, state scope of practice laws, and provider specialty type

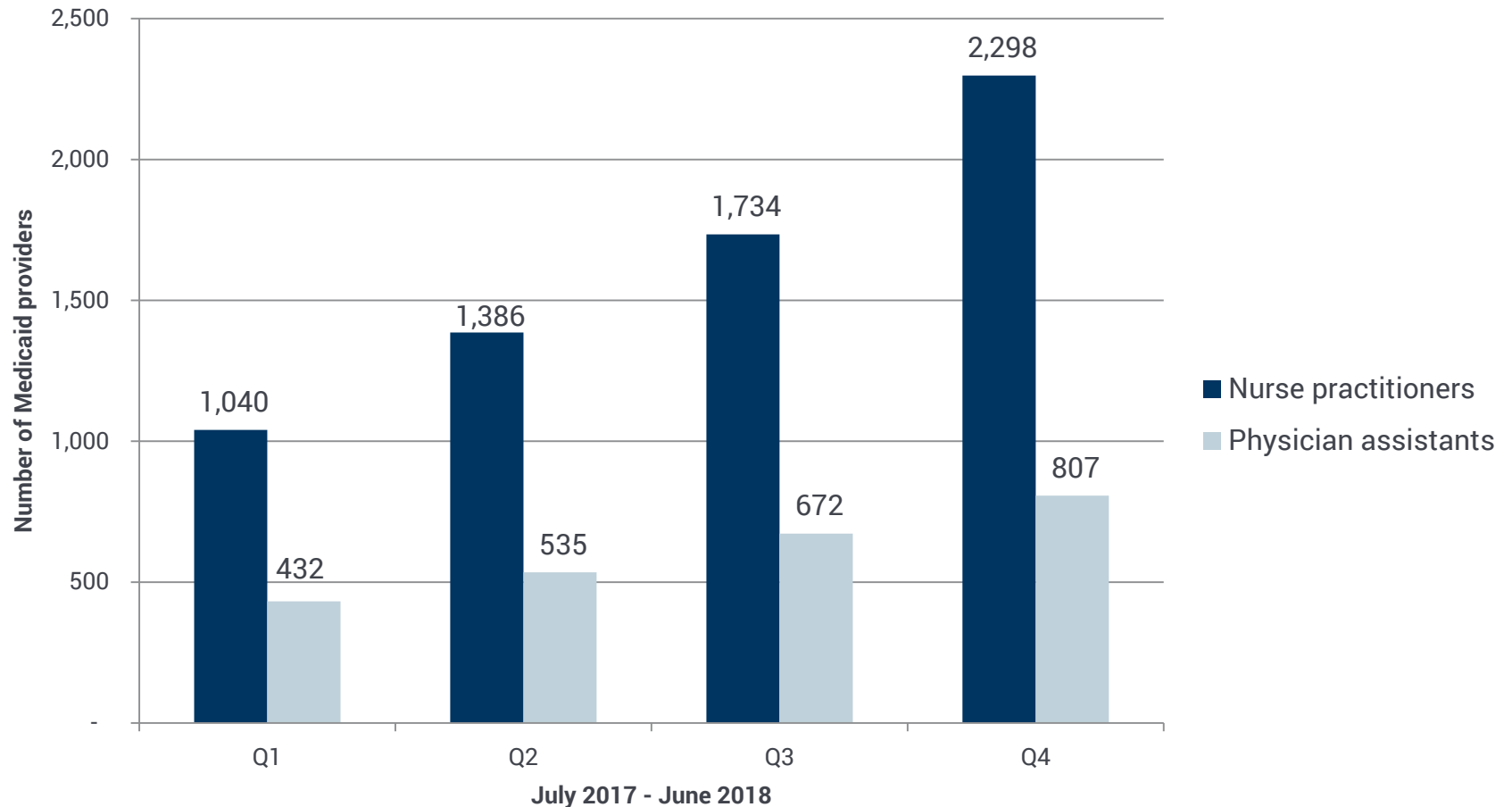
General Trends

- Total number of buprenorphine prescribers increased by 12.2 percent during the study period
 - NPs: increased by 78.8 percent
 - PAs: increased by 48.8 percent
- Number of patients treated by advanced practitioners increased substantially
 - NPs: increased by 182.3 percent
 - PAs: increased by 142.2 percent
- Most patients (97 percent) received prescriptions from physicians

Prescribing Trends in Medicaid

- Forty percent of patients had a buprenorphine prescription paid by Medicaid
- Six out of 10 providers in the study prescribed to Medicaid beneficiaries
- Number of all Medicaid prescribers increased
 - NPs: increased by 121.0 percent
 - PAs: increased by 86.8 percent
 - Physicians: increased by 5.9 percent

Number of Medicaid Providers with Buprenorphine Prescriptions, by Prescriber Type, July 2017–June 2018



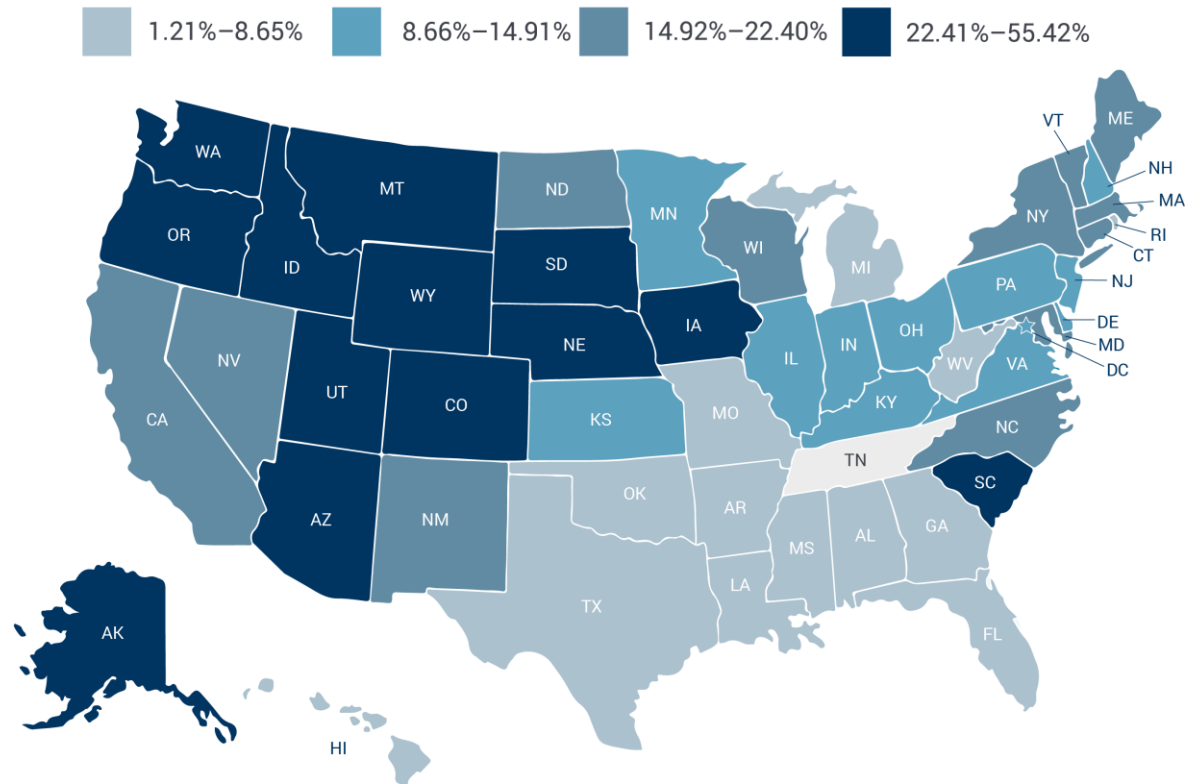
Notes: Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q4 refer to the first, second, third, and fourth quarter respectively of the study period. Patients may receive prescriptions from multiple provider types.

Source: Varghese et al. 2019.

Prescribing Trends for Advanced Practitioners

- Advanced practitioners accounted for increasing proportion of all Medicaid prescribers during study year
 - NPs: increased from 7.2 to 13.6 percent
 - PAs: increased from 3.0 to 4.8 percent
- Physicians as a share of all Medicaid prescribers decreased from 89.8 to 81.6 percent

Percent of Medicaid Beneficiaries with Buprenorphine Prescriptions from Advanced Practitioners, by State, July 2017–June 2018



Notes: Data are not available for Tennessee because the state does not allow nurse practitioners or physician assistants to prescribe buprenorphine.

Source: Varghese et al. 2019.

Medicaid Compared to Other Payers

- Number of Medicaid beneficiaries with prescriptions increased by 12 percent (vs. 6 percent for all patients)
- Medicaid covered the majority of patients treated by advanced practitioners
 - Medicaid: 50.8 percent
 - Commercial: 37.9 percent
 - Cash: 13.6 percent
 - Medicare: 10.3 percent

Urban and Rural Trends

- Nearly nine out of ten buprenorphine prescribers practiced in urban areas
 - However, rural areas had a higher proportion of advanced practitioner prescribers (24.0 percent vs. 17.8 percent)
- The proportion of Medicaid beneficiaries treated by advanced practitioners increased by approximately 15 percent in both urban and rural areas

State Prescriptive Authority

- Patients were more likely to receive buprenorphine prescriptions from advanced practitioners in states with full NP prescriptive authority
- States with full NP prescriptive authority had a higher proportion of advanced practitioner prescribers (25 percent vs. 16 percent)

Prescriber Patient Load and Prescribing Capacity

- Under DATA 2000, qualified prescribers are subject to a limit on the number of patients to whom they may prescribe
- Medicaid providers are treating more patients compared to other payers, but are still prescribing below the initial waiver limit of 30 patients

Policy Implications

- Expanding provider authority for prescribing buprenorphine can increase access to treatment for OUD
- Barriers to treatment persist
 - Only 5 percent of eligible providers have obtained a buprenorphine prescribing waiver
 - Access to buprenorphine-waivered providers varies, with shortages in rural areas

Next Steps

- IMPAQ will present study findings at Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management (APPAM) conference in November
- *Health Affairs* blog post forthcoming
- MACPAC will post contractor report on our website



Analysis of Buprenorphine Prescribing Patterns Among Advanced Practitioners in Medicaid

—
Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission

John Wedeles