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.)

- 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).
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.
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.

October 31, 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