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Medical Student Perspectives on Opioid Use Disorders: An Innovative MAT Waiver Training Integration during IM Clerkships

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Needs and Objectives:

The opioid epidemic in the US has become a major issue in healthcare. In 2017, there was an estimated 72,306 drug overdose related deaths and Emergency Departments (ED) nationally saw a 30% increase in opioid related overdoses.

Innovative programs can help ensure patients are offered optimal treatment options. Most primary care physicians self-report they lack the skills to identify and appropriately treat substance abuse disorders (SUDs). Studies have suggested that the best solution is to improve medical school curricula, which translates to better educated future physicians. Unfortunately, due to timing and exposure constraints, most medical school programs do not provide the necessary information to successfully manage and treat SUDs in practice.

To prescribe buprenorphine, an 8-hour Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) training must be completed. Only 35,604 of the approximate 800,000 US physicians (<3%) are registered to prescribe buprenorphine.

We implemented an innovative approach to provide students with the skills to understand how to prescribe buprenorphine and build confidence to medically manage opioid use disorders in the future. By completing the training students will be eligible for a their MAT waiver upon obtaining their permanent license. Prior to integrating the training into the internal medicine clerkship, a preliminary study similar in nature was performed that focused on first and second year medical students perspectives. The results were analyzed and presented, and based on the positive results of the study, it was decided to implement the study into the internal medicine clerkship during the third year of medical school.