Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

Opportunities to Enhance Retention on Medication for Opioid Use Disorder for Adolescents and Young Adults: Results from a Qualitative Study With Medical Providers in Philadelphia, PA

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Background: Medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) are under-prescribed to adolescents and young adults (AYA). Few published studies have explored challenges to and opportunities to enhance continuous provision of MOUD for AYA. Our report focuses on this emergent theme that was identified as part of a larger qualitative study.

Methods: We purposively sampled and enrolled medical providers who prescribed MOUD to AYA. Semi-structured individual interviews using chart-stimulated recall explored barriers and facilitators to MOUD retention. We used modified grounded theory in our qualitative analysis, with double coding of interviews.

Results: Barriers to retention on MOUD included patient-level (i.e., return to substance use) and system-level factors (i.e., cost, delayed receipt, pharmacy challenges, and in-person visit requirements). Facilitators included patient-level (i.e., motivation, support networks) and system-level factors (i.e., telehealth access, availability of certified recovery specialists).

Conclusions: Our study is the first to look at retention for this key age group, setting it apart from the existing body of literature that looks at medication initiation. Our findings confirm that significant systemic barriers exist to AYA patients' retention on MOUD. Further research is needed to develop interventions that facilitate continuous delivery of high-quality care among this key population.

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