



Module 2

Medications for Treating Opioid Use Disorder: Challenging Cases

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Case 1:

“I want to get off buprenorphine now”

- 28-year-old female with 8 year history of severe OUD treated for the past 2 months with buprenorphine/naloxone
- Adherent with follow-up visits but never engaged in counseling or mutual help groups
- All urine drug tests have been buprenorphine positive and other substances negative
- Is working full-time as a cashier in a supermarket
- Wants to stop buprenorphine because she doesn't want her new boyfriend to know about her opioid addiction

How do you respond to this patients request to discontinue buprenorphine?



Case 1: *“I want to get off buprenorphine now”* Summary/Recommendations

28 yo female
w/ severe OUD
successfully
treated with
buprenorphine
for 2 months

Wants to stop
buprenorphine
because she
doesn't want
her boyfriend
to know about
her addiction

- Longer treatment is better
- Explore reasons for discontinuing buprenorphine such as future pregnancy
- Educate that addiction is a chronic disease requiring long-term treatment
- Develop strategies to discuss her addiction history with others including couples therapy
- Consider transition from daily buprenorphine to monthly injectable buprenorphine or naltrexone
- Maintain engagement regardless buprenorphine taper and keep the door open to restarting buprenorphine if needed
- Discuss relapse and overdose prevention

Case 2: *“I don't want to stop using cocaine”*

- 42-year-old male with over a 20 year history of severe OUD in recovery for 15 years since starting methadone in an opioid treatment program
- One month ago he successfully transferred from methadone to office-based treatment with buprenorphine/naloxone
- Adherent with follow-up appointments and no evidence of non-prescribed opioid use however urine drug tests are cocaine positive
- Actively engaged in group counseling and mutual help groups
- He is not ready to stop “occasional” intranasal cocaine use that he and his wife enjoy doing together

How would you address this patient's continued cocaine use?



Case 2: *“I don’t want to stop using cocaine”* Summary/Recommendations

42 yo male w/
over 20 yr h/o
severe OUD in
long-term
recovery on
buprenorphine

Does not want
to stop his
cocaine use

- Do not stop treatment with buprenorphine
- Explore reasons for cocaine use including self-medicating a mood disorder
- Discuss risks of cocaine use including fentanyl contamination and overdose risk
- Discuss treatment goals and recovery promoting activities
- Create shared treatment plan including staying safe
- Consider treatment with contingency management (e.g., decreased office visits)
- Manage higher risk of buprenorphine diversion during cocaine use