Medication Assisted Treatment of Opioid Use Disorders in the Black Community

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Acknowledgment

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At the time of this publication, Miriam E. Delphin-Rittmon, Ph.D, served as Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Administrator of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

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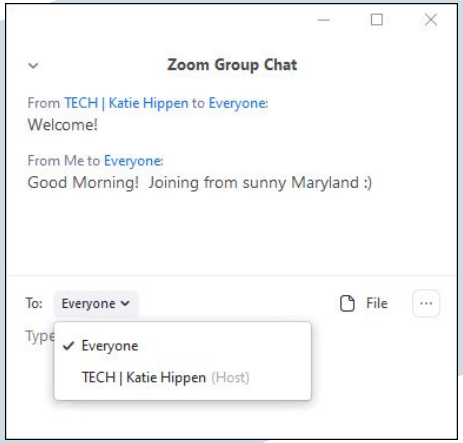

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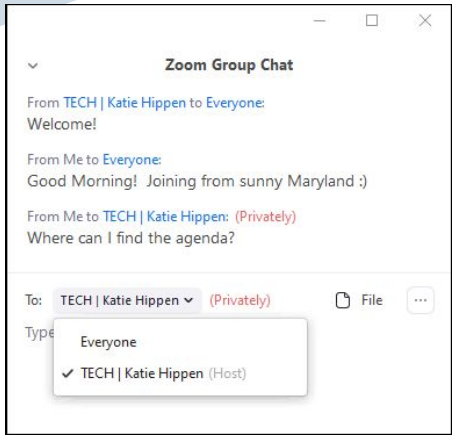

The use of affirming language inspires hope and advances recovery.

LANGUAGE MATTERS.

Words have power.

PEOPLE FIRST.

The ATTC Network uses affirming language to promote the promises of recovery by advancing evidence-based and culturally informed practices.

Today's Program

- Special thanks to the CE-ATTC for its support of this session of the Black Psychiatrists of America Health Equity Webinar Series
- Focus is regional on DE, MD, PA, VA, DC, and WV, yet information has national relevance

Today's Presenter

Stephen McLeod-Bryant, MD, President-elect, Black Psychiatrists of America

Dr. McLeod-Bryant has previously been Medical Director for the South Carolina Department of Mental Health. He is past Vice-Chair for Clinical Affairs in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at MUSC and Medical Director of Charleston Memorial Hospital. After 24 years at MUSC, he left Charleston to join Meharry Medical College's Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. He was Vice-Chair and then Interim Chair of the Department. In 2015, he left Meharry and joined the University of Miami's Miller School of Medicine (MSOM) Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and is currently Clinical Associate Professor. He was recently appointed a Co-Chair in the Dean's Task Force on Structural Racism and subsequently headed the Department's Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

Today's Objectives:

- Understand the factors causing the disproportionate toll of opioid overdoses in the Black community
- Name the three primary medication assisted treatments for opioid use disorders
- Identify the barriers to greater use of these treatments to combat opioid use disorders (OUD) in the Black community

The Opioid Crisis

- The initial stages began with the over-prescribing of pain-killing opioids
- Opioids not only dull pain, they can produce euphoria
- When the government and the medical profession restricted prescribing, people with OUD turned to illicit opioids (e.g., heroin) to avoid withdrawal
- Increasingly, illicit opioids and other drugs are laced with fentanyl (50X more potent than heroin)

JREHD, 2022

The Opioid Crisis

- 1.4M Americans with OUD
- 144/208 people dying daily of drug overdoses by the beginning of the pandemic, died of opioids
- The rate of drug overdose deaths of Black people ↑ 44% in 2020 (22% for White people)
- Elderly Black men died at 7X the rate of elderly White men

- *TIP 63; CDC, 2022; JREHD, 2022*

The Opioid Crisis

- The pandemic's social isolation and economic insecurities have escalated the crisis
- In Baltimore and DC, the rate of opioid-related deaths has increased 400+% since 2014
- Opioid-related deaths far exceed deaths due to homicide
- Of those who died, Black people had the lowest prevalence of previous drug treatment (8.3%)

JREHD, 2022

Medication-Assisted Treatment For Opioid Disorders

- Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) is the use of medication, in combination with counseling/psychotherapy, to treat substance use.
- Buprenorphine (e.g., Suboxone)
- Methadone
- Naltrexone (e.g., Vivitrol)
- All treatments are significantly superior to placebo in reducing illicit opioid use.

MAT medications, counseling, and related conditions, 2022; TIP 63

Medication-Assisted Treatment For Opioid Disorders: Methadone

- Only dispensed from SAMHSA certified Opioid Treatment Programs (OTP).
- Reduces opioid cravings
- Used to manage withdrawal and maintain abstinence
- Treatment begins daily with take-home medication dependent on time in treatment

MAT medications, counseling, and related conditions, 2022; TIP 63

Medication-Assisted Treatment For Opioid Disorders: Buprenorphine

- Suppresses and reduces craving for opioids
- Used to manage withdrawal and maintain abstinence
- Scheduled medication
- Treatment may begin daily, but take-home medication occurs sooner than with methadone

MAT medications, counseling, and related conditions, 2022; TIP 63

Medication-Assisted Treatment For Opioid Disorders: Naltrexone

- Blocks the euphoric and sedative effects of opioids.
- Prevent relapse after detoxification (7-14 days off opioids)
- Not a scheduled medication
- Given IM once/month

MAT medications, counseling, and related conditions, 2022; TIP 63

Medication Assisted Treatment For Opioid Disorders: Naloxone

- An opioid antagonist which reverses an overdose
- Signs of overdose:
  - Fingernails or lips blue or purple
  - Breathing or pulse slow or stopped
  - Vomiting or gurgling noise
  - Unarousable
- Every person with OUD, relative or friend of someone with OUD, or user of opioids should have Narcan on hand

TIP 63

Barriers to Utilization of MAT

- Ignorance
- Mistrust of the system
  - Why trust a ‘system’ which helped produce the crisis in the first place
- Bias in treatment
  - Resistance to providing care to Black people with OUD

Barriers to Utilization of MAT

- Lack of providers
  - Buprenorphine restrictions-e.g. 30 patients 1st year
  - Methadone OTP-1500+ serving nearly 400K
  - Unwillingness of providers to treat people with OUD
- Lack of ***access*** to providers
  - Black overdose deaths was 2.5X higher in counties with the most mental health providers compared to counties with the least

TIP 63

Barriers to Utilization of MAT

- Income inequality
  - Black overdose deaths are twice as high in counties with more income inequality
  - Income inequality is a proxy for housing instability, transportation access, and insurance status

CDC, 2022

Increasing Utilization of MAT

- Community education
- Holistic approach integrating housing, job, transportation, medical care, MAT, and behavioral health resources
  - For instance, the Leadership Council for Healthy Communities, Inc., https://lchcnetwork.org/
- Political action

Summary

- Opioid use disorder and deaths due to overdose are ravaging the Black community.
- Effective medication treatments exist to reduce opioid use and prevent overdose deaths.
- Ignorance, economic inequities, and structural racism all play a role in preventing greater use of MAT.
- We must get the word out, arm ourselves with the knowledge, and work across disciplines to fight OUD.

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Q & A

ATTC Addiction Technology Transfer Center Network
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The ATTC Network Mission & Vision

- Accelerate the adoption and implementation of evidence-based and promising addiction treatment and recovery-oriented practices and services;
- Heighten the awareness, knowledge, and skills of the workforce that addresses the needs of people with substance use or other behavioral health disorders; and
- Foster regional and national alliances among culturally diverse practitioners, researchers, policy makers, funders, and the recovery community.

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