

My name is Dr. Lee Snook and I am a physician in private practice providing pain management and addiction treatment here in Sacramento. I currently serve as Speaker for the California Medical Association (“CMA”). I am here today representing the California Society of Addiction Medicine (“CSAM”). CSAM represents over 600 California physicians and associated professionals in the field of addiction medicine.

My comments are focused on Opioid Use Disorder (OUD), part of the spectrum of Substance Use Disorders. As you are all well aware, we continue to be in the midst of an opioid use disorder epidemic. There remain many barriers to provide treatment for this very treatable disorder. One of CSAM’s goals is to increase the number of buprenorphine providers to treat opioid addiction. These providers – typically primary care providers – must first obtain a federal waiver, by applying to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). This requires physicians to take 8 hours of online training.

While the number of providers in California who are obtaining the federal waiver has been increasing, there are not enough providers using their waiver. There is a serious shortage of providers prescribing this life-saving medication. Addiction treatment has not historically been part of primary care practice, however, we are beginning to see greater gains in reaching newer generations of physicians. We must raise the number of providers prescribing in order to ensure access treatment for opioid use disorder.

As a partner with the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), CSAM has been providing training and mentoring to physicians and other providers through the MAT Expansion Project. As you know, Medication Assisted Treatment, or MAT, is a proven and effective treatment approach to OUD. We simply need more physicians providing this treatment.

Through this project:

- We are reaching primary care providers in rural areas where the need is great
- We are targeting at least one provider in each clinic to take on the role of “champion,” to encourage other providers to treat opioid dependent patients
- We are making inroads to normalize this treatment in training more primary care physicians
- We are working to reduce the perception that one must jump through many extra hoops in order to prescribe buprenorphine
- We are working to reduce the fear that comes with extra DEA oversight
- We are also working to overcome the perception by some physicians who are concerned about not having enough time or resources to help patients with opioid addiction
- We are helping primary care providers overcome barriers to doing drug testing, understand the relationship with the pharmacy, and navigate the system of Prior Authorizations required by some insurance carriers. (And we are aggressively advocating for removal of those barriers.)
- We are working to inform providers about the best way to refer patients to local resources they have

Under the MAT Expansion Project, CSAM received funding in September 2018 to offer training and mentoring to 48 primary care providers through “Mentored Learning Experience Scholarships” that provided these providers with:

- Full funding to attend the CSAM Addiction Medicine State of the Art Conference in San Francisco.
- During the 3-day conference, they learned more about MAT, motivational interviewing, drugs of abuse, opioid dependence, pain and addiction, the

- environment of addiction, including co-occurring disorders or poly-substance abuse, and how to reduce the barriers for patients to get access to treatment.
- In small groups, providers received mentoring by addiction medicine experts.
  - Real life case studies were presented and discussed in a facilitated roundtable format.
  - The mentoring at the conference provided providers with an improved understanding of opioid addiction, medications, co-occurring disorders, treatment modalities, minimizing diversion, behavioral interventions, and new major developments in MAT useful to the provider.
  - Following the conference, there have been electronic meetings with providers that consist of discussing key points and information provided during the conference, providing updates on new developments in MAT, as well as holding question and answer sessions facilitated MAT subject matter experts, therefore providing on-going support and guidance from the experts.

Here is some feedback received from providers who received scholarships:

*“This experience has actually made me realize that I should be practicing addiction medicine instead of just family practice.”*

*“There was no MAT training included when I was in my residency. I think all providers should receive MAT training including eligibility for x waiver upon graduation.”*

*“Without the scholarship, I would likely not have been able to attend and learn the things I did.”*

Based on the feedback we are receiving, these providers are now prescribing and encouraging other providers to do the same. Many of them are becoming the “mentors”

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or “champions” in their own communities. The objectives of this project are being accomplished.

CSAM is receiving funding from DHCS to continue this project for two more years. As a result, the Mentored Learning Experience Scholarships will be offered in Southern California locations in September 2019 and 2020. CSAM will continue to sustain efforts after federal grants to the state have been expended through its own program of offering mentoring and scholarships. However, without sustained federal funding, the number of scholarships available will likely be reduced because this program would then revert to being solely dependent on private donations. We hope that there can be ongoing federal and/or state funding to support expansion of this important workforce development effort to expand access to MAT into our communities.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on the panel. Please feel free to direct any questions to me personally or email: [csam@csam-asam.org](mailto:csam@csam-asam.org)

**California Society of Addiction Medicine (CSAM)**

575 Market Street, Suite 2125  
San Francisco, CA 94105  
415/764-4855  
FAX: 415/764-4915  
Email: [csam@csam-asam.org](mailto:csam@csam-asam.org)  
[www.csam-asam.org](http://www.csam-asam.org)