



The Coalition of Medication-Assisted Treatment Providers and Advocates of New York State

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For Immediate Release

COMPA Members Help Researchers Study Benefits of Telemedicine in Treating Opioid Use Disorder and Hepatitis C

-- All OTPs Selected for PCORI-Award Study are COMPA Members, Across NY State --

(New York, New York – July 17, 2019) The Coalition of Medication-Assisted Treatment Providers and Advocates of New York State ([COMPA](#)) today announced that seven of its member Opioid Treatment Programs (OTPs) at 12 locations are participating in a study which integrates the treatment of substance abuse and hepatitis C virus (HCV) with the goal of achieving better outcomes through telemedicine. The study, “Comparison of Telemedicine to Usual Care for HCV Management for Methadone-maintained Individuals,” is supported by a \$7 million award from the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute ([PCORI](#)) to the University at Buffalo (UB).

OTPs are federally certified and state licensed to provide FDA-approved medications to treat opioid use disorder: methadone, buprenorphine, and extended-release injectable naltrexone. The purpose of the five-year award to UB is to find an effective way to treat individuals who use drugs and who also have HCV, a population that has traditionally been difficult to treat in conventional healthcare settings. Even when receiving regular treatment for substance use at OTPs, these patients often don’t seek treatment for HCV, despite the fact that roughly half of them or more are likely to be chronically infected. In 2014, HCV killed a record 20,000 Americans, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and liver related deaths as well as liver cancer are projected to increase exponentially over the next decade.

“Our OTPs across New York State answered the call to science for this important research,” said Allegra Schorr, President of COMPA. “We are proud that each OTP chosen for the study is a COMPA member, and we are hopeful that, if proven successful with HCV, telemedicine might be a useful approach to treating other diseases where patients face similar challenges.”

Based on promising pilot study [results](#) published online in 2018 and now available in the current issue of *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, the ongoing program with an eventual enrollment of more than 600 participants, is designed to compare the effectiveness of a patient-centered, opiate agonist treatment (OAT)-integrated telemedicine-based approach for management and delivery of HCV treatment to persons with substance use disorders (PWSUD) versus usual care. In a separate [publication](#), the authors reported that individuals on methadone preferred the one-stop shopping and convenience afforded by the telemedicine interactions that occurred in the OTP.



The Coalition of Medication-Assisted Treatment Providers and Advocates of New York State

“The conventional method of treatment delivery -- referral to an offsite location -- has discouraged many individuals from initiating or completing treatment,” said Andrew H. Talal, MD, professor of medicine at the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences at UB and a physician with UBMD Internal Medicine, who leads the study. “Telemedicine removes geography as an obstacle to high-quality specialty care for a common condition among individuals at an OTP. It permits direct interaction between the doctor and a patient. We are also able to administer the new HCV medications together with methadone, which increases medication adherence. Now that HCV treatment cures almost everyone in 2 to 3 months, without significant side effects or shots, the addition of HCV treatment could enable the OTP to move to providing comprehensive care. Management of other common conditions encountered in the OTP patient population could be modeled on our experiences with HCV care delivered in the OTP,” Talal added. “We commend COMPA on its robust response to our statewide call for OTPs to participate.”

Ken Bossert, Director of Drug Abuse Research and Treatment Program (DART), Buffalo, one of the study’s participants, stated, “Our program and community have witnessed firsthand how the lack of integrating care for patients also diagnosed with HCV has affected their quality of life in general and their ongoing recovery from opioid use disorder specifically. Having access to the advanced innovative opportunities associated with the use of telemedicine in this research initiative is a pivot point we hope to draw from when advocating to continue providing this valuable treatment approach after the research is completed.”

Lawrence S. Brown, Jr., MD, CEO of START Treatment & Recovery Centers (START), Brooklyn, another study participant, stated, “Behavioral, biomedical, and health service research have been part of START’s legacy since its founding in 1969. Our patients and staff view this study as another vehicle in which START is connecting research, the provision of the highest quality of care, and educating the public by sharing our experiences. All three are components of our agency’s mission. We began embracing research and this study demonstrates our continued enthusiasm to seek answers to the questions of today to improve care, celebrating START’s 50th anniversary.”

Other participating COMPA members include: Mt. Sinai Beth Israel, Manhattan and Brooklyn; Cornerstone Family Healthcare, Newburgh; Crouse Hospital, Syracuse; Pathways -- Rochester; Pathways – Buffalo; and Strong Recovery/Addiction Psychiatry Division University of Rochester Medical. For more on the study visit: <https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT02933970>. An additional link to a study-specific website is: <https://www.cdnetwork.org/TEAMC>

About COMPA

The Coalition of Medication-Assisted Treatment Providers and Advocates of New York State (COMPA) is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to treating addiction through the use of pharmacotherapy as a part of a comprehensive bio-psycho-social approach to treatment. COMPA-member programs, numbering more than 45 organizations across New York State, treat more than 41,000 New Yorkers from every corner of New York State and help them to overcome their dependence on illicit opioids and other drugs. COMPA, along with its member treatment programs, affiliate members, and corporate members works to improve all aspects of the lives of patients. This involves advocacy with federal, state, and local governments as well as a variety of educational activities. COMPA’s program members provide Medication Assisted Treatment and include both Opioid Treatment Programs (OTPs) and Office-Based Opioid



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Treatment (OBOT) providers. COMPA is the New York State member program of the American Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence (AATOD). Visit www.compa-ny.org.

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