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TREATMENT INNOVATIONS OF OPIATE DEPENDENCE TREATMENT

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Opiate dependence is a serious psychiatric disorder with substantial suffering for the patient, his environment and society as a whole. Currently available treatments include abstinence oriented treatment with naltrexone and substitution treatments with methadone and buprenorphine. However, treatment compliance with naltrexone is very low resulting in low effectiveness. In addition, existing substitution treatments only show moderate effectiveness resulting in a large number of patients showing continued drug use and serious psychological, somatic and functional impairment.

New treatment strategies involve:

- a. the development of long acting opiate antagonists (naltrexone) and partial agonist (buprenorphine) to improve treatment compliance and treatment retention,
- b. new substitution options such as slow release oral morphine (SROM), oral diacetylmorphine (heroin) and inhalable and injectable diacetyl morphine (heroin assisted treatment: HAT).

Recently, a new approach using neurosurgical and neuromodulatory techniques has been advocated to help treatment refractory opiate dependent patients. Finally, certain combinations of pharmacotherapy and psychosocial interventions have shown promise for future improvements.

This presentation reviews the evidence of existing treatments for opiate dependence and explores the new treatment options for patients not fully responsive to the existing treatment modalities.