U.S. Food and Drug Administration Announces Newest Actions for Opioid Use Disorder

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced the latest action to encourage and support development of treatment options for individuals with opioid use disorder. The FDA released the first of two new draft guidances intended to aid industry in developing new medications for use in medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for opioid dependence. The draft guidance focuses on ways drug companies can more efficiently explore innovations in sustained-release depot buprenorphine products (i.e., modified-release products for injection or implantation).

Use of MAT for opioid dependence relies on prescription drugs, including buprenorphine, methadone, and naltrexone, to stabilize brain chemistry; reduce or block the euphoric effects of opioid drugs; relieve physiological cravings; and normalize body functions. Regular adherence to MAT with buprenorphine helps patients gain control over their use of opioid drugs without causing the cycle of highs and lows, intoxication, and withdrawal associated with opioid drug misuse or abuse. At proper doses, buprenorphine can also block the pleasurable effects of other opioid drugs, making continued opioid drug abuse less attractive. Passive-compliance formulations (i.e., those that do not require taking a daily medication), such as sustained-release depots or implantable devices that release a continuous level of the drug, can provide effective treatment of opioid drug dependence that may also result in less misuse, abuse, or accidental exposure compared to self-administered formulations.

New Tools Allow Individuals to Assess Brain Health at Home

The BCAT®, a leading provider of cognitive assessment tools for health care professionals, announced the launch of a suite of services for consumers to access at home through its ENRICH® Visits website (access https://enrichvisits.com). Services include the ENRICH Calculator, myMemCheck™, and the BCAT Virtual Visit. These tools are consumer-friendly and designed for individuals to take at home. The ENRICH calculator is a tool to help consumers understand how daily life impacts their brain health. myMemCheck is a scientifically valid and trusted self-assessment tool that can identify cognitive problems at an accuracy rate of ≥90% and inform health care professionals if a formal evaluation is necessary. Consumers can also schedule a session with a specialist to talk in real time about their brain health.

Through a series of eight questions, myMemCheck accurately identifies individuals likely to have memory impairment and those with probable mild cognitive impairment. It does not appear to have an education or gender bias, which are two common concerns with similar assessments. Individuals receive a detailed report that may be used to initiate conversations with general practitioners on whether a more formal cognitive assessment is necessary.