PSYCHIATRIC PHARMACISTS: LOW BARRIER OUTREACH PHARMACIST

Extending Substance Use Disorder Treatment to Meet Patients Where They Are

Taking Substance Use Disorder Care on the Road

During the COVID-19 pandemic, San Francisco created a Shelter in Place (SIP) hotel program to house people experiencing homelessness in non-congregate shelters. Seeing high overdose rates led the city to initiate pharmacist-led delivery of buprenorphine to these sites. Once the pandemic ceased, transitioning to permanent supportive housing became a priority along with the delivery of outreach services to provide medical, psychiatric, and substance use care to support patients.

As an outreach pharmacist in San Francisco, extending psychiatric pharmacy services beyond traditional clinical settings is a driving goal for Dr. Jacky Parizher. A psychiatric pharmacist who provides low barrier treatment for opioid use disorder within permanent supportive housing, she delivers medications, psychiatric and substance use disorder care, and hope to patients who have difficulty accessing care in typical clinic settings.

Building Trust

Dr. Parizher can be found walking throughout San Francisco—often logging up to 12,000 steps in a day—meeting patients where they are and building trust along the way. She independently prescribes, assesses, and manages buprenorphine therapy for her patients under a collaborative practice agreement. She conducts visits, delivers buprenorphine, and administers long-acting injectables to patients in their supportive housing units. In addition to her focus on opioid use, she manages other psychiatric and substance use disorders in conjunction with the outreach-based interdisciplinary team.



Photo Credit: Cindy Chew

"Jacky's work as a psychiatric pharmacist has been essential to saving numerous lives in the opioid overdose epidemic. The bureaucracy around buprenorphine dispensation means jumping through hoops to get lifesaving medications, something that is difficult for patients living with substance use disorder. Clients with severe mental illness have similar difficulties engaging with the health care system to get the treatment that they need. This role helps get medications prescribed, dispensed and delivered to clients, meeting them where they are and improving their quality of life.

She has also been an incredible asset in expanding my knowledge base and comfort as a Family Nurse Practitioner to be able to prescribe and adjust psychiatric treatments based on sound evidence. Her availability to consult and accompany me on client visits has reduced hesitancy to offer effective treatment to clients, in the absence of expedited psychiatry care. Instead of waiting for an intake appointment in an outside clinic, teaming up with a psychiatric pharmacist allows us to jointly initiate treatment and help clients much sooner, preventing, in many cases, crisis episodes in the community."

–Caitlin Higginbotham, RN, PHN, FNP, Nurse Practitioner, Permanent Housing Advanced Clinical Services (PHACS)

IMPACT
ON PATIENT CARE

As an Outreach Pharmacist, Dr. Parizher:

Manages around **30 patients** with OUD in supportive housing and non-congregate shelters

Administers long-acting monthly buprenorphine on a regular basis to **12 patients** monthly with goal of transition to primary care clinics when appropriate

Makes a difference by:

- Reducing access barriers to life saving medication for opioid use disorder (OUD)
- Increasing retention on buprenorphine
- Reducing the risk of overdose for people using opioids
- Promoting whole person care through connections to residential treatment, primary care, and other services
- Mitigating risks by providing naloxone, medication information, and support

Delivering Hope, Truth, and Treatment

Dr. Parizher's impact as a outreach pharmacist is best described by a patient she serves.

> *Navigating opioid withdrawal is INCREDIBLY difficult. For me, home visits were the only way recovery was going to work. Jacky's demeanor, consistency, professionalism, and persistence were lifesavers. When you are fighting an addiction to fentanyl, you need someone who can 'take the wheel' and guide you through the darkest moments with skill and clinical experience, Jacky did exactly that. She was well-spoken, reassuring, and possessed the perfect balance of compassion and clinical skill.*
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> *Whether she was talking me through the mental hurdles, or professionally administering my Sublocade injections, everything was handled with the highest level of care. She gave me hope, truth, and a reason to keep moving forward. Today, I am living proof that recovery is possible with the right support. I am incredibly grateful for everything Jacky has done; since the day we met, my life has been positive and progressive in every way."*
>
> *–A Patient*

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