

PSYCHIATRIC PHARMACISTS: **COMBATING THE OPIOID CRISIS** THROUGH MEDICATION FOR OPIOID USE DISORDER TREATMENT

Having a psychiatric pharmacist brings patient care to another level

Dr. Seth Gomez is a psychiatric pharmacist working for Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services, consulting with more than 40 clinics within the network. But on Mondays, you can find him at Trust Health Center, a federally qualified health center serving people who are homeless or on the verge of being homeless.

At Trust Health Center, Dr. Gomez collaborates with the clinic's primary care physicians and psychiatrists, and applies his extensive knowledge of medication therapy to those with opioid and other substance use disorders.

Dr. Gomez supports primary care physicians in providing Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) services. He is able to conduct full patient assessments, initiate medication and monitor patients, adjusting medication as needed.

Medication for Opioid Use Disorder Treatment

When opioid use turned into a full-blown epidemic, the Trust Health Center found itself unable to offer treatment for opioid use disorder. That's when Dr. Jeffrey Seal, Medical Director and Psychiatrist, asked Dr. Gomez to join his team.

Together they changed the culture from being unreceptive to MOUD to providing low-barrier access to medications for substance use disorders.



By working closely with providers, Dr. Gomez not only helped increase their comfort level around MOUD, but also improved overall access to care within the center.

“Having a psychiatric pharmacist brings **more confidence in approaching medically complex patients.**”

- Dr. Jeffrey Seal

Medical Director and Psychiatrist

TREATMENT THAT WORKS

“Alameda county is the perfect example of a community that’s addressing access to treatment for substance use disorders by including psychiatric pharmacists within its network, which has improved patient outcomes.”

- Dr. Seth Gomez

Due to innovations like the expanded use of psychiatric pharmacists, Alameda county saw the following improvements over two years (2015-2017):



44%

decrease in mortality rate



16%

increase in MOUD



16%

decrease in inappropriate opioid prescribing

“Having a psychiatric pharmacist brings **consistent and methodical approaches to medication and treatment pathways.**”

- Dr. Jeffrey Seal

Medical Director and Psychiatrist

Inspired by Success

A 40-year-old woman came to the center to receive medical treatment. At the time, she was sleeping on park benches and in/out of the emergency room for opioid use disorder and alcohol withdrawal. While completing the patient’s assessment, Dr. Gomez discovered a previous diagnosis of PTSD and depression and assisted in getting her proper treatment.

With the right medications, the patient’s alcohol and opioid use significantly declined, allowing the health care team to successfully treat her Hepatitis C.

Today, Dr. Gomez is happy to say the patient is living in her own apartment, has abstained from using opioids and alcohol, and is able to care for herself. It’s stories like these that inspire Dr. Gomez to continue the work he is doing and advocating for current and future psychiatric pharmacists.

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