

A Randomized Clinical Trial of Methadone Maintenance for Prisoners: Findings at 6-Months Post-Release

Aims: This study examined the effectiveness of methadone maintenance initiated prior to or just after release from prison at 6-months post-release.

Design: A three-group randomized controlled trial was conducted between September 2003 and June 2005. *Setting:* A Baltimore pre-release prison.

Participants: Two hundred-eleven adult pre-release inmates who were heroin-dependent during the year prior to incarceration. *Intervention:* Participants were randomly assigned to the following: Counseling Only: counseling in prison, with passive referral to treatment upon release ($n = 70$); Counseling+Transfer: counseling in prison with transfer to methadone maintenance treatment upon release ($n = 70$); and Counseling+Methadone: Methadone maintenance and counseling in prison, continued in a community-based methadone maintenance program upon release ($n = 71$).

Measurements: Addiction Severity Index at study entry and follow-up. Additional assessments at six months post-release were treatment record review; urine drug testing for opioids, cocaine, and other illicit drugs.

Findings: Counseling+Methadone participants were significantly more likely than both Counseling Only and Counseling+Transfer participants to be retained in drug abuse treatment ($p = .0001$) and significantly less likely to have an opioid –positive urine specimen compared to Counseling Only ($p = .002$). Furthermore, Counseling+Methadone participants reported significantly fewer days of involvement in self-reported heroin use, and criminal activity than Counseling Only participants. *Conclusions:* Methadone maintenance, initiated prior to or immediately after release from prison, increases treatment entry and reduces heroin use at six months post-release as compared to counseling only. This intervention may be able to fill an urgent treatment need for prisoners with heroin addiction histories.