ED-Initiated Buprenorphine

Diagnosis of Moderate to Severe Opioid Use Disorder
Assess for opioid type and last use
Patients taking methadone may have withdrawal reactions to buprenorphine up to 72 hours after last use
Consider consultation before starting buprenorphine in these patients

COWS

(0-7) none - mild withdrawal
Dosing: None in ED
Waivered provider able to prescribe buprenorphine?
YES
Unobserved buprenorphine induction and referral for ongoing treatment
NO
Referral for ongoing treatment

(≥8) mild - severe withdrawal
Dosing: 4-8mg SL*
Observe for 45-60 min
No adverse reaction
If initial dose 4mg SL repeat 4mg SL for total 8mg
Observe **
Waivered provider able to prescribe buprenorphine?
YES
Prescription 16mg dosing for each day until appointment for ongoing treatment
NO
Consider return to the ED for 2 days of 16mg dosing (72-hour rule)
Referral for ongoing treatment

Notes:
*Clinical Opioid Withdrawal Scale (COWS) ≥ 13 (Moderate-Severe) consider starting with 8 mg buprenorphine or buprenorphine/naloxone SL
** Patient remains in moderate withdrawal may consider adding additional 4mg and observation for 60 minutes
Warm hand-offs with specific time & date to opioid treatment providers/ programs within 24-72 hours whenever possible
All patients should be educated regarding dangers of benzodiazepine and alcohol co-use
Ancillary medication treatments with buprenorphine induction are not needed